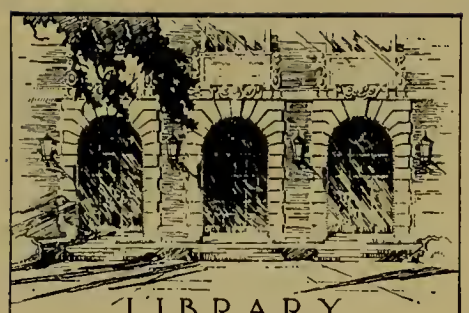

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THE

WAY OF THE WORLD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"DE LISLE," AND "THE TRIALS OF LIFE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE

WAY OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

"La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure,
Nous l'allons montrer tout à l'heure."
LA FONTAINE.

EMMELINE had not half finished her letter when she was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Sophia.

"Papa and mamma," said she, hastily, "are both in the drawing-room, and have sent for you, so come along, and don't look as if you were just going to be hanged."

They descended together. Lady De Verney was standing by the fire flirting a hand-screen backwards and forwards, as if striving to control her anger; her husband was seated, with that dull, contented, but submissive air, which he commonly wore in his wife's presence, and with his eyes cast on the ground; Lord Redhurst stood at some distance, as if in no ways mixing in the conversation, idly playing with his seals.

"Miss Laurimer," said her aunt, in an accent of concentrated displeasure, "I have sent for you to know how soon you mean to accept Lord William Neville, who does you the honour to propose to you. I am told by my daughter, that you have had a letter from him. She says it is some time since she saw the servant who brought it, and yet it seems you did not think it incumbent on you to consult me on the subject."

"I feared to intrude," meekly replied Emmeline, "although I was desirous of an opportunity of communicating to you the purport of Lord William's note."

"Now there is no intrusion," continued Lady De Verney: "you can give me the letter, I suppose."

"It merely contains an offer of his hand," answered Emmeline, who shrank from the idea of publishing a love letter, particularly as she did not suppose any one present would be much gratified by the violent panegyric lavished on herself.

Lady De Verney stormed at this evasion to get off showing the letter, which she now insisted on seeing, not from any curiosity, but from that mere love of domineering, which had become an habitual indulgence with her.

Emmeline at length took it out of her pocket, whilst her aunt tauntingly observed

that was the last place in which she could have expected so romantic a person to keep her love letters.

Miss Laurimer coloured indignantly, and shook her hair off her brow with a motion more like Lady Maddalena than the gentle orphan.

"I shall see this gentleman to-night," said Lady De Verney, "and shall desire the marriage may be delayed as little as possible."

"But *I* cannot tell Lord William so," said the surprised Emmeline, "because I do not mean to marry him at all."

Rage kept Lady De Verney, for a moment, speechless. Her husband and son had previously ventured to hint Miss Laurimer might have an opinion on this subject different from hers, and it was for the purpose of proving to them that she would permit no opposition to her sovereign pleasure that she had sent for her niece. She vented her passion, at last, in

a torrent of abuse, declaring that Emmeline should instantly leave the house if she was so mad as to refuse such an offer, and when Lord William's proposition was sanctioned by her approval!

Lord De Verney endeavoured to soothe this storm, and to persuade his wife to retract her sentence of dismissal upon Emmeline. Lord Redhurst changed colour, bit his lips, and could not sustain the abstracted air which he had assumed at the beginning of the conversation. Lady Sophia was struck dumb, not at her mother's anger, to which she was so much accustomed that it had lost all its terror and much of its influence over her, but at the idea of Emmeline leaving them. Miss Laurimer alone was calm.

"Remember," said her aunt, "you know not a soul to go to. Your character will be for ever lost if you are turned out of your

uncle's house. You are young, poor, and helpless."

"Indeed I am," said Emmeline, with a deep sigh of despondency.

"Why then will you perversely choose to encounter all these evils? Why persist in the obstinate folly of refusing a person I recommend, and to whom you can have no reasonable objection? If you are wilfully bent on your own destruction, can I help it?" said Lady De Verney, in a tone meant to be persuasive.

"I dare say not," said the hapless victim, faintly. "I do not accuse you. You were kind enough to ask me to your house. I am grateful to you. It was an unexpected kindness. You expel me from it. I do not pretend to complain. How soon must I leave you?"

"This instant, ungovernable girl!" ex-

claimed Lady De Verney, her eyes flashing fire.

"Oh, my dear Maria," said her husband, soothingly, "not this instant: you know not what you say. It is late and wet. She cannot seek a home to-night."

"Then let her sleep in the streets," retorted Lady De Verney; "for she shall leave this house to-night;" and, having thus announced her sovereign pleasure, she quitted the room, pulling the door after her with a violence that made the whole company start.

Emmeline was pained and disgusted at this display of violence; but she was not terrified. She did not doubt that Lady De Verney was capable of executing the threat she had uttered; but she felt that it would be a disgraceful weakness on her part to comply with her imperious bidding, and that, distressing as was

the alternative of quitting her house on the instant, she must endure it.

Lord De Verney was absolutely frightened at his wife's fury. He approached Emmeline as soon as her termagant ladyship had left the room, and said to her, in a tone of remonstrance, and hardly above a whisper, "My dear Emmeline, how could you be so imprudent? Why would you not temporize a little? If you had but said you would think of it."

"I *had* thought of it, my lord," replied Emmeline, calmly. "It does not appear to me that I ought to marry Lord William Neville, and you would not surely have me trifle with him to keep Lady De Verney in good humour. After his generosity to me such conduct would be, on my part, unpardonable."

"My romantic cousin," said Lord Redhurst, advancing, "your reasons for rejecting

my friend, might be very good in any other situation; but we must act a little according to circumstances. You are making yourself unhappy in all probability; you are certainly making him wretched, and for what? For fear that you may be unable to love and admire your husband in a way that not ten wives have done since the deluge. If you wish for a little time to improve your knowledge of Neville's character, and to get rid of your prejudices against his principles, which, you must give me leave to say, I think wholly unfounded, I will endeavour to gain it for you. When my mother is calmer she will listen to me. I have some influence with her, and I do not often use it, or perhaps . . . . . Yes, that will do," and, dropping Emmeline's hand, he darted out of the room without finishing his sentence.

"Where is he gone now?" said Lord De

Verney, mournfully. "He will not succeed with his mother. She is not accustomed to yield to any one; however, this night you shall not go, and that I will take upon myself to tell her."

"Oh, stay, my dear uncle," said Emmeline, eagerly arresting him, "you must not torment yourself about me. To be the cause of dissension in this family would give me more uneasiness than all that has past. I am but where I was when Lady Maddalena——" her eyes filled with tears, and she stopped.

"My poor child!" said Lord De Verney affectionately.

"I was ungrateful," said Emmeline, forcing a smile through her tears. "If I have your good wishes I am less to be pitied." She rose: "it is getting late, I must prepare to depart."

"Do not go without seeing me again," said her uncle. "I hope still that you will not leave us. If you must go, I will take care that you are comfortably placed, and that you suffer as little inconvenience as possible from a violence I cannot control."

Miss Laurimer thanked him, and retired to her own room to make the necessary arrangements, accompanied by Lady Sophia, who one moment pathetically condoled with her, and the next laughed heartily at some ludicrous idea with which her mother's anger had inspired her. But Emmeline could command her attention to others no longer. The scene she had gone through had bewildered and overcome her. Her heart beat quickly, she could scarcely breathe, and with difficulty dragged her trembling limbs from one place to another. Mechanically she threw her things into her trunks, without observation or reflec-

tion. Had she come to her uncle's house strong in health and spirits, she would probably at this instant rather have rejoiced at leaving so harassing a situation, and indignation at the unmerited treatment she received would have inspired her with energy equal to the exigence. But it was far otherwise. The illness that had brought her to the brink of the grave had enfeebled her frame, and had left her a prey to languor and lassitude. The death of her aunt, and the manner of it, had sunk with overpowering weight on her mind, extinguishing every gay and vivid feeling, and almost changing her character. When most she needed the soothing balm of sympathy and affection, she had met with cold disdain and overbearing insolence. Now, like some blasted flower, she drooped and faded, without the power, and with scarce the wish to contend against the fearful storm. The violence of

Lady De Verney appeared to her depressed spirits but as the prelude to unknown sorrows and greater difficulties. She had, with the assistance of her cousin, finished all her packages, when a message from Lady De Verney summoned her to her uncle's study.

"Another scene," thought the shuddering Emmeline, as with a feeble and uncertain step she followed the servant. When she reached the door, she involuntarily stopped, dreading to enter. The servant threw it open, and, summoning all her courage, she advanced, and with surprise beheld Lord William Neville in apparently earnest conversation with her aunt.

"Emmeline," said Lady De Verney, endeavouring to smooth her perturbed brow, "I have acceded to Lord William's request. He is generous enough to declare he will not take an immediate answer to the proposal we

were this morning discussing, and only wishes to see you constantly, and endeavour to overcome an inflexibility which, I must be permitted to say, appears to me as unreasonable as it is ungrateful. His patience with you surprises me, and I desire you will put it to no further trial."

Miss Laurimer was about to reply, but, eagerly interrupting her, Lord William entreated she would have some compassion on so old a friend, and not reduce him to despair at once; "for," he continued gaily, "you know by experience how many years I can live upon hope, however faint."

"And am I to reward your generosity," asked Emmeline, "by giving you hopes which it is so much more than probable I can never ulfil?"

"If you can never be persuaded to fulfil them," replied Lord William, "the loss will

be mine, and I am ready to submit to it, if in the meantime you will permit me to nourish them in your society. Lady De Verney has been so good as to promise as much for me, surely she could never promise in vain," and his significant countenance said, I would not bind you, but do not provoke your aunt.

Emmeline understood it, and charmed with his generous care of her, and his apparent forgetfulness of his own interests, she began to tax herself with fastidiousness and illiberality in refusing to contribute to the happiness of a person so ready to sacrifice his own wishes to her comfort. She therefore replied with quickness, "Believe me, I am not ungrateful. Even if your company gave me less pleasure than it really does, I am unable to refuse a request made, as this is—Lady De Verney's desire must insure my acquiescence."

"It is well," said Lady De Verney, who flattered herself that she triumphed, and rising haughtily, she added, "I am glad to see you a degree more reasonable," while, as she left the room, she darted at her a fiend-like look, which said, "I would torture you if I dared."

Emmeline's meek eye sunk abashed under the fiery glance of her aunt. Her embarrassment at being left alone with Lord William gave way to curiosity to know how he should have come there at so unusual an hour.

"Redhurst came for me," replied he: "he told me how shamefully you were baited by that violent mother of his. I was almost choked with passion, but still I had reason enough left to perceive I must use a little policy with the lady, and restrain the utterance of sentiments which, however natural, might ruin me without helping you. You must know she is troubled with the mania of

popularity. Anxious to be spoken well of in the world, she keeps her unfortunate temper in great subjection before strangers. Perhaps for that very reason her family suffer more from it. I confess I cannot comprehend how you can live with her."

"How can I help it? I have no where else to go," replied Emmeline mournfully.

"Oh, Miss Laurimer, is that quite true?" asked Lord William in a tone of mingled pleasantry and reproach. She blushed, but remained silent. "I do not wish to distress you," he continued, "you have been tormented enough about me to-day, and I would only assure you, that in asking for a respite for you, I did not in any point of view wish to hamper or biass your judgment, but simply to appease your aunt. If my love cannot make you happy, at least it shall not cause you uneasiness.

I will not, unauthorised by you, name the subject again."

"You are very kind, very considerate," faltered out the agitated Emmeline, and they separated. When Miss Laurimer again met Lady De Verney, no notice was taken of the morning's conversation, and she remained a peaceful inmate of that house she had so lately expected to be driven from.

CHAPTER II.

"Why there is but one body in all this council which cannot betray itself. We two are one."

MASSINGER.

WHEN it became ascertained that Lord William Neville was seriously in love with Miss Laurimer, the votaries of fashion opened their eyes to her uncommon beauty and sweetness. Gratified by the notice she now received, she discovered new charms in the polished and elegant females that sought her acquaintance; and her spirits rising with the increase of her popularity she no longer considered society as

uninteresting, or herself as a blank. In all situations, whether public or private, from the crowded assembly to the interior of her uncle's house, Lord William's influence was visibly exerted for her comfort. Gradually every feeling of pleasure became associated with him, and to his presence she looked to dispel those clouds that the irksomeness of her situation and the overbearing haughtiness of her aunt spread over a mind naturally so sanguine.

She had communicated to Lady Helena, who was still in the country, the whole course of the late events, and had received her warm congratulations on the prospect of happiness which lay before her, and more particularly upon her being released from the tyrannous and unkind domination which Lady De Verney was too well disposed to exercise. Lady Helena knew more than Emmeline of Lord

William Neville, and her warm encomiums on the goodness of his disposition, and the generous, manly spirit which he had displayed on many occasions went further than his own protestations of love to convince Emmeline that he was worthy of the affections she was disposed to nourish for him. There was one subject which, however, gave her serious concern, and was a theme of frequent and painful reflection. She had had strong reason to observe, since the evening in which she and her friend, Lady Helena, had observed the Count Ragotzky's attempt to hand a note to Lady Sophia, that there was an understanding between them; and the thought that her giddy cousin might fall into the hands of a mere adventurer, and she could consider the Count in no other light, gave her great anxiety. To mention it to Lady De Verney she was very reluctant, because she knew that a scene of

violence must ensue, which she was by no means disposed to be the cause of. Of Lord Redhurst, although she believed he would be not less interested in such a matter than herself, or than any other member of the family, she knew too little to make such a communication to him; besides that, a feeling of consideration for Lady Sophia made her wish to spare her, if she should prove at all to blame, all unnecessary exposure. To Lord De Verney the same objection applied; and, moreover, Emmeline had too little respect for his judgment and decision to hope that he could interfere as promptly and as efficiently as the occasion required. After much deliberation she determined, first of all, to try whether Lady Sophia would be induced to confess to her what was the real state of the affair, and to ascertain by that means whether her suspicions were well or ill founded, leaving to the result

of this attempt her future conduct. Lady Helena, to whom she had imparted her intention, agreed with her as to the necessity of some immediate step being taken to avert the consequences which seemed too probable, if so unworthy an intrigue were permitted to continue, and recommended that Emmeline should disclose her suspicions to Lord William Neville, who could speak to his friend Lord Redhurst, without any of the embarrassment that withheld her; but the strong desire which Emmeline felt to preserve her cousin's reputation from the whisper of calumny, prevented her adopting this suggestion, and she resolved to adhere to the course she had at first been disposed to adopt.

With the giddy Lady Sophia, who talked almost incessantly, and upon a hundred different topics in succession—or rather, in confusion—it was not necessary to wait long for

an opportunity. The mere mention of the Count Ragotzky was quite enough to set the chatterer off in an encomium upon his beautiful eyes, which, she said, she thought were the very perfection of every thing sentimental and interesting.

"By the bye, Sophia," said Emmeline, "that is a subject upon which I have long wanted to talk to you. Is it with your mother's sanction that this Count Ragotzky has declared himself your admirer?"

Lady Sophia coloured, and looked like a child who has been detected in some delinquency; after a moment of confusion, she seemed to recollect herself, and said, in a half-pouting air, "My admirer, indeed! What could put that into your head, Miss Laurimer?"

"Nothing," replied Emmeline, "but his own behaviour—and yours."

"Mine!" said Lady Sophia, who had by this time recovered her self-possession sufficiently to think it was incumbent upon her to affect anger at the imputation; "pray what behaviour of mine has ever given you reason to think I would do anything so improper as to encourage a person like the Count, and without mama's permission?"

"I am glad to hear," said Emmeline, calmly, and without noticing the impertinent tone that her cousin had adopted, "that your own good sense points out to you how highly improper it would be to encourage such a person as the Count; and I find my conjecture was right, that it could not be sanctioned by Lady De Verney."

"I declare," said Lady Sophia, pouting, and half ready to cry, "I cannot imagine what can have given you such suspicions of me. What

is the Count to me? He does not pay me more attentions than any other person. It is impossible not to feel interested for him when one hears of all he has suffered—of all the wounds he has endured, and his being prisoner in the horrid cold snows of Siberia, and having nothing to live upon but the money he procured by the sale of the skins of the beasts he shot; and being away from his friends and family, from his mother, who is so doatingly fond of him, and from his native country. And then he talks so delightfully, and is such a noble, elegant, interesting creature! I declare he has actually shed tears when he has been telling me of all the hardships he has undergone."

"Pray when did he tell you of all these moving accidents?" asked Emmeline.

"It was not me he told," replied Lady Sophia, "it was mademoiselle."

"And she told them again to you?" said Emmeline.

"No, I was there when he told the story; he has told it several times; but he tells it to mademoiselle—not to me," said Lady Sophia, who felt that she had been somewhat too communicative.

"What do you mean by *there?*" said Emmeline; "I did not know you had seen the Count any where but on the Saturday nights; and I am sure he had no opportunity then to give you this history of his life, which seems to have made so deep an impression on you."

"Oh! no, it was not then, he told me all this," said Lady Sophia. "And if you will promise not to say a word about it, for mademoiselle made me vow I would never disclose it to a human being, I will tell you how I came to know all about it."

Without waiting for the promise she had

exacted, the voluble girl went on. "You know mama is having her portrait painted by the Chevalier Vander Braun, the Dutch painter, who, they say, is so clever, and who, Redhurst says, is not fit to paint the sign of the Saracen's Head.—Well, you must know too that, notwithstanding her odd, ugly, old fashioned look, Mademoiselle Blache is a woman of family, and is the heiress to a large property, which was lost in the French Revolution. She has been talking about this to the Count, who has friends in Paris, among the first personages of the court, although the poor dear creature cannot go there himself, on account of his political principles. When he heard her story, he offered his services to have her claims put forward in the best way possible, and as mademoiselle had not an opportunity of giving him all the particulars at our parties, do you know he was good enough to take the

trouble to come here, whenever mama went to the Chevalier Vander Braun, to receive from mademoiselle the papers, and the explanations which she had to give. Oh! he has been here very often, when you knew nothing at all about it, and mademoiselle, who has no secrets from me, let me be with her when he came—and we have had such delightful conversations, and I assure you I like him very much indeed. But now I have told you all about it, and, my dearest Emmeline, you must not call him my lover, because, if mama heard such a word whispered, she would forbid him the house for ever, and then I know the Count would break his heart."

"How do you know that his dismissal would have so fatal an effect upon him?" asked Emmeline.

"Because, he says, he has never met with true sympathy until he knew us," replied

Lady Sophia. "And mama's kindness to him, and the commiseration of mademoiselle and myself, he says, are the only consolations he has been able to find in all his wretchedness. Do you know—I think he would have killed himself but for me."

"Why so?" asked Emmeline.

"Why, because, one day after he had been telling us of his sufferings and the pain he feels at being banished from his native country, he said that, since he could find no one who cared for him, he was resolved not to live any longer. And then poor mademoiselle, who has a much more feeling heart than you give her credit for, burst into tears, and said we all cared for him, and asked me if I did not wish him to live. Of course I said I did, and mademoiselle told me then to make him promise not to entertain any such desperate notions; and when I insisted that he should promise me, do you know the

poor fellow was as submissive as a child, and said, that, since I desired it, he would continue to live. I declare, I cried more at that one time, than I ever did before in all my life."

"And have you told Lady de Verney of this?" asked Emmeline.

"Oh! no," replied Lady Sophia. "Did I not tell you it was a great secret?"

"But does she not know of the Count having been here when she was away?"

"She knows he has been here; because she has sometimes found him here upon her return; but she thought he only came to make a call upon her—and mama is very fond of him too, and thinks he has been very ill used, and hopes he will be restored to his estate in Poland."

"And for my own part," said Emmeline, "I wish he had been restored to it—whatever it is—long ago."

"Do you indeed?" said Lady Sophia. "Well, that is very kind of you."

Emmeline saw enough in her cousin's narration to convince her that her own suspicions had been well founded, and that there was such a plot as she had imagined going on between the Frenchwoman and the Count. There was an abundance of simplicity, even to childishness, in all that Lady Sophia had told her, and yet she believed that under the cover of this apparent artlessness, there was a considerable portion of guile, and a strong disposition to conceal the real truth. She had no doubt that Sophia was the intended victim of the contrivances that were in progress; but she was convinced also that her cousin knew more of the Count's intentions respecting herself than she chose to avow. She therefore determined not to let the present occasion pass without telling her cousin of the peril in which she

stood, and endeavouring to guard her against the consequences of trusting to her false friend, mademoiselle.

"All this is very interesting, no doubt, Sophia," she said; "but it does not prove to me that the Count has no motive in endeavouring to excite your sympathy, beyond that which you seem to be aware of."

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Sophia.

"I mean in plain English then," said Emmeline, "since you will not understand me in any other way, that the Count has endeavoured, and is still endeavouring to gain your affections."

"Well, I can't help what you choose to take into your head," said Lady Sophia, in an offended tone, "I only know that it is the greatest nonsense in the world."

"Then you can have no objection to my

mentioning to Lady De Verney all that you have told me now?"

"Yes, certainly I can have. Did I not expressly tell you it was a secret, and that you were not to mention it to any one?"

"But I cannot see any reason for secrecy. If mademoiselle has any private communications with the Count, I have no desire to penetrate them; but there can surely be no reason why you should receive him in the absence of your mother, and without her knowledge."

"Dear me, what a fuss you make about nothing. You may go and tell mama, if you like. It will only be a scolding for me, and you may have the consolation of getting poor mademoiselle into a scrape."

"I have no wish to get mademoiselle into a scrape, nor to cause unnecessary pain to any one; but I should be very sorry if you were to

have occasion hereafter to blame me for the silence which you now wish me to preserve. Depend upon it, my dear Sophia, nobody ever yet practised concealments from their true friends, that they had not reason deeply to regret having done so."

"But I have no concealments," said Lady Sophia angrily.

"Why then," said Emmeline—"since you force me to convince you that I know more than you will avow—did you express so much alarm the other night, when the *billet* which the Count was handing to you, fell on the rug?"

"Good Heavens, did you see it?" exclaimed Lady Sophia, betrayed into a confession by the suddenness of the question.

"Indeed I did see it," replied Emmeline, "and saw the readiness with which Mademoi-

selle Blache interfered to prevent its being discovered."

"Nay then, it is of no use to deny it," said Lady Sophia, "but, dearest Emmeline, you don't mean to say any thing about it—you don't mean to tell mama? I assure you I have no serious thoughts whatever about the Count. He says he loves me, and I believe it would break his heart just now to turn him off; but depend upon it I never contemplated any thing so silly as to marry him."

"But do you not know," said Emmeline, gravely, "that you are acting unjustly towards him, and still more culpably towards yourself and those friends who are interested about you, by permitting him to indulge hopes which you say you never intend shall be realized."

"Oh no, there is no injustice in it at all,"

replied Lady Sophia, "the poor man finds a consolation in telling me how much he loves me, and I confess I am amused by it. It is so pleasant to be flattered, and to be told that the happiness of a handsome man, six feet high, with the finest eyes in the world, depends solely upon my will."

"But what do you think of the conduct of Mademoiselle Blache?" said Emmeline; "your mother confides to her the care of one whom she loves better perhaps than any other person in the world, and she is ready to betray that trust at the first opportunity that presents itself."

"Oh, nobody cares what mademoiselle says or does," replied Lady Sophia. "All she thinks about is making friends with the Count in order to get back her property."

"Although I could not acquit her of blame, I should think less ill of her than I do," said

Emmeline, "if I believed one word of the story she has told you."

"What do you believe then?" asked Lady Sophia.

"I believe that the whole history of her losses is a fiction, and that it was invented for no other purpose than to introduce you to this Count, who has contrived to secure her assistance in his design against you. You must be aware, my dear Sophia, that young and handsome as you are (you know I don't flatter you) and rich as you are to be, you will undoubtedly receive eligible offers from some persons of your own condition in this country, and you cannot be ignorant also that such attractions as you possess form a very tempting inducement to many others whom you ought not to listen to. If you could doubt for a moment what the intentions of the Count are, look to the manner in which he pursues them, and you must be

convinced. Is it consistent with the character of an honourable man to suborn the affections of the daughter of one who has received him hospitably, and who has treated him with great kindness and consideration, even supposing that his claims and his station are such as he represents them? Is it not a proof of unquestionable baseness in him to have attempted to gain his object by the fraudulent means he has adopted, by the assistance of such a person as Mademoiselle Blache."

"But I tell you again," said Lady Sophia, "that I am not at all serious in listening to the Count."

"But you ought not to listen to him at all," reiterated Emmeline, "and painful as it may be to me, I shall be compelled to speak to Lady De Verney upon the business, unless you promise me that you will at once put an end to so unbecoming a connexion."

"Well, if you insist upon it," said Lady Sophia, "I will promise you; but then you must give me your word of honour, that, if I keep my faith with you, you will not utter a syllable of what has passed between us to mama."

"If you promise me sincerely," replied Emmeline, "and if you keep your promise truly, I most readily engage that no human being shall be acquainted with the purport of our conversation."

"Well, then, I do promise you most sincerely," said Lady Sophia, "and there's my hand upon it."

Emmeline took her hand, and, pressing it cordially, said—"My dear Sophia, I can hardly expect you will thank me at this moment for thus thwarting your wishes; but the day will come, and very soon, when you will be convinced that I have undertaken this painful

duty from no consideration but that which the interest I feel in your happiness supplies."

Lady Sophia threw herself into her cousin's arms, and embraced her affectionately.

"Remember, then," said Emmeline, "this communication is to be confined to our own bosoms."

"Certainly," replied Lady Sophia.

"And I need not observe to you, that of all persons," added Emmeline, "neither Mademoiselle Blache, nor the Count Ragotzky, are to be made acquainted with it."

"Not for the world!" replied her cousin.

CHAPTER III.

"The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it,
Than is my deed to my most painted word."

SHAKSPEARE.

THE reader already knows enough of Lady Sophia's character to have expected that the promise, which concluded her conversation with Emmeline, was one which she was the least likely to keep. In fact, the first thing she did upon quitting her cousin was to repair to Mademoiselle Blache's room, and she was no sooner in it than she told her, from beginning to end, all that her cousin had said to her.

The intriguing Frenchwoman was dismally confounded when she learnt that her plot had been discovered by Emmeline, of whose penetration she had before been convinced, and whom she feared and hated, as the sordid and guilty always fear and hate those of whose virtue they stand in awe. Lady Sophia's information, that Emmeline had promised to observe a strict silence respecting the discovery she had made, at least for the present, in some degree reassured her, for she knew her well enough to be convinced, that, having made such a promise, Miss Laurimer would religiously preserve it until she should be absolved by the open violation of the condition on which it had been made. Mademoiselle's first care, therefore, was to impress upon Lady Sophia great circumspection in her behaviour towards the Count when she might meet him, and the expediency of a bold unhesitating denial of any

accusation that might be made against her: her next was to seek the Count, and, under the pretext of a visit to a milliner, she repaired to his lodgings.

The conversation between these worthy confederates was long and interesting. Lady Helena's guess respecting the gentleman's intentions was as correct as if she had had the honour of his most intimate confidence. He was as arrant a sharper as ever thrust himself into good society by dint of mere effrontery, and the credulity of the persons he met with,—and the proneness to mock sentimentality which abounds among people who have nothing else to do but to talk about what they neither feel nor understand, ensured his footing there. This, however, would not have been sufficient to enable him to cut the figure he did, but the resources of so ingenious a man were abundant. He was a practised gamester, and knew all the

tricks of his trade so intimately, that while he could find any one to play with him, he was sure of winning money enough to satisfy all his wants without exciting any suspicion, from his unchangeable luck. At *soirées* he of course played only at such games as are common in society, and chiefly at *écarté;* but he cut the king so often that there was no withstanding him; and he had so agreeable a volubility that every one with whom he played was too much amused by it to attend as closely to the game as with such a player would have been advisable. At other places, where play ran high, and where men only were present, no one heard him utter a word; an inflexible gravity marked all his proceedings. He won frequently, almost always, and his success was attributed to the earnestness with which he played, and to his giving up his whole soul to the pursuit. He had been in London two seasons; nobody knew

he was, nor where he had come from. His first entrance into society was under the auspices of the Dowager Lady Elliot, with whom his acquaintance had been purely accidental. Once introduced, his title, his appearance, which was rather striking, and his faculty of talking with women, and holding his tongue with men, sufficed to keep up his reputation. He was, however, well aware of the precarious tenure upon which he held it, and had made up his mind to establish himself as soon as he could find a convenient opportunity. None appeared so eligible as matrimony, and although he might have captivated dozens of old ladies of rank and fortune, Monsieur De Ragotzky had too much good taste so to sacrifice himself. In Lady Sophia Laurimer he had found a person as handsome as he could desire, and young and vain, and silly enough to be a fit object for his purpose; and in Mademoiselle

Blache, with whom he very soon came to an understanding, a most able coadjutor. The terms upon which she was to assist his design were soon settled between them, and all seemed to go on swimmingly, when the unlucky discovery of Emmeline crossed their hopes.

"What is to be done?" said mademoiselle, when she had concluded her narration.

"*Peste!*" cried the Count. "It is very unlucky to have happened just at this moment, when my plans are by no means matured."

"But if we do not take care," rejoined mademoiselle, "and hit upon some means of preventing the explosion which this Miss Laurimer threatens, and which is likely enough to ensue, I fear they will never have an opportunity of ripening."

"We must prevent that by some means," said the Count, "but how, is the question. Our safety lies in secrecy. If once the suspi-

cions of Lady De Verney, or of Lord Redhurst, (who, cold as he seems, would blaze into fury if he dreamt of our design,) should be aroused, there is an end of it for ever."

"Well, but can you suggest no expedient?" asked mademoiselle, somewhat impatiently, "you, whose brain is fertile at invention. Does nothing occur to you?"

"O yes, twenty thousand things occur to me," replied the Count, "only I don't know which of them to choose;" and he walked about the room in deep thought. Stopping at length, he said, "Miss Laurimer is the only person who at present suspects my intentions towards her cousin?"

"Just so," replied mademoiselle.

"What then if I should transfer my affections to her, and insist that my heart is so occupied with her charms that I can think of nothing else."

"But you forget that she is engaged to Lord William Neville!"

"Not at all; but I propose to give her an opportunity of choosing between the Count Ragotzky and that gentleman; and if she be really a person of such good taste as the world gives her credit for, I shall run some hazard in making the offer."

"Nonsense! Can you imagine that such an artifice will impose upon her?"

"Really it is very hard to say how much or how little is enough to impose upon very clever and clear-sighted people; but that, permit me to remind you, that is not the question. I have no hope, no intention of imposing upon her. If I can only blind the other persons of whose vigilance I am afraid, my end will be answered."

"But you will be immediately involved in a quarrel with Lord William Neville."

"That is not certain; and if it were, the danger is not enough to deter me. Until he is married, Lord William has no right to forbid all mankind from feeling the influence of the charms by which he has himself been captivated; and if he will quarrel, trust me for gaining the right on my side."

"But what will Lady De Verney say?"

"Lady De Verney, unless I flatter myself, has a strong partiality for me. Not strong enough I confess to accept me as her son-in-law; but quite enough to make me her nephew. She does not care for Lord William Neville, and she hates her niece. This I have from very good authority, because she told me so herself."

"Well, now I think of it again, it does not seem so wild a scheme as it appeared at first. At all events we shall gain time by it."

"We shall do more; we shall destroy the

effect of any thing that Miss Laurimer may be disposed to say. If she entertains my proposition, (which is not very likely,) she is silent; if she rejects it, all that she may say against me will be placed to the score of her dislike and resentment."

"Exactly so," replied mademoiselle, "but when do you propose to put this scheme in practice?"

"Immediately," said Ragotzky, "we have not a moment to lose. Our secret is in the keeping of an enemy, and that enemy, *sauf votre respect, mademoiselle,* is——a lady."

"You have no right to complain of ladies' want of firmness in keeping your secrets, Count," said mademoiselle,

"Nor shall any lady to whom I am under obligations so heavy as those which you have conferred on me," replied he, "have reason to complain of my want of gratitude."

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"*À propos* the terms of our contract are perfectly understood between us?"

"Perfectly; a *billet* for five and twenty thousand francs on the day that I shall carry off Lady Sophia, and the immediate possession of my apartments, furniture, and cabriolet, No. 24, Rue de Provence, in Paris. After that, with so many charms of person and mind, it will be Mademoiselle Blache's fault if she does not become a Countess herself."

"Mademoiselle Blache has no such intention, I can assure you. If I once find myself independent in my own dear Paris—the only city in the world where life is worth enjoying—I would as soon think of encountering another such tyrant as Lady De Verney, as put myself within the control of that monster called a husband. But I must be gone. Hasten your proceedings, for I cannot help feeling we are in danger—*Au revoir!*"

"Adieu!" said Ragotzky, as he escorted this convenient governess to the stable-door, at the back of the house in which he lived, and through which mademoiselle made her way into a bye street, discreetly providing against the chance of being seen to quit the Count's residence.

"What would become of us poor gentlemen who live by our own wits, and other people's weakness, if we had not the assistance of such amiable and disinterested persons as Mademoiselle Blache!" thought the Count, as he returned to his room. The step he had resolved on was a bold one, but he had been too long accustomed to desperate enterprises to hesitate about this, the mere audacity of which had charms for him.

While he was deliberating, however, on the manner in which he should make his purposed communication to Lady De Verney, it occurred

to him that he might strengthen his plan, so as to make her ladyship's co-operation beyond all question, certain. Lady De Verney had been extremely communicative to him respecting Emmeline's intended marriage, and had given full vent to that acrimony of feeling towards her niece which appeared to have been increased by the advantageous offer of Lord William Neville. Ragotzky remembered that the notion had occurred to him, while her ladyship was talking, that she would have been much better pleased to have had Lord William Neville as a suitor for her daughter than for Emmeline, and that she had said, in express terms, that he was not only a much better match than Emmeline had any right to look for, in point of station, but also far superior to her personal deserts. He remembered too, that she had expressed herself somewhat enviously respecting the fortune, of which Lord

William Neville was at present possessed, and the chance of his becoming at some future day Duke of Wellingborough. It was true his brother was living, in good health, only a few years older than Lord William, and lately married; but the excited imagination of Lady De Verney, overlooked all the natural obstacles which lay in the way of its dreams being realised, and in her anger she had actually persuaded herself, before she had done talking, that Emmeline would probably become Duchess of Wellingborough.

The more he thought upon this, the more certain he became, that by exciting the hopes of Lady De Verney, that Lord William Neville might be induced to transfer his affections from Emmeline to Lady Sophia Laurimer, he should effectually blind her to his real designs; while, by pretending a passion for Emmeline, he should secure an unsuspected and unrestricted

access to her ladyship's house. He repaired thither without delay, and having found an opportunity of communicating his new plan to his faithful ally, mademoiselle, she approved of it, and undertook to prepare Lady Sophia for the part she was to play, while the Count's personal operations were to be suspended for the present.

This was, however, the most difficult part of the task. Vain and frivolous as Lady Sophia was, she could not at first accede to a proposition, the certain effect of which, she saw, must be to occasion considerable annoyance, if not real sorrow, to Emmeline. Mademoiselle's persuasions, however, at length put to flight her scruples, and she agreed to seem to be deeply in love with Lord William Neville, and in despair at the thought of his being lost to her for ever.

Mademoiselle Blache having rubbed her eyes

sufficiently to give her the appearance of having been weeping, and putting on as disconsolate a look as her very ugly features were capable of expressing, repaired to Lady De Verney's room, for the ostensible purpose of giving her an account of some commissions she had been entrusted with by her.

It was impossible for Lady De Verney not to observe the ridiculous appearance of mademoiselle's face, or not to hear the long sighs which she introduced at every convenient, or inconvenient pause in her speech.

"What is the matter with you, mademoiselle?" said Lady De Verney.

A longer and deeper sigh than any she had before vented, was the only reply.

"Do not stand making those hideous faces," said Lady De Verney, impatiently, "but say if anything has happened to afflict you."

"Alas! it is an affliction I shall never recover," sobbed mademoiselle.

Lady De Verney began to think that something distressing had happened, and in a milder tone, repeated her inquiry.

"It is not for myself that I weep," said the governess, trying in vain to squeeze out a tear for the occasion, and vehemently rubbing her eyes to conceal the ill success of her efforts.—"But for that poor child, Lady Sophia."

"Is Sophia ill?" cried Lady De Verney, in real alarm.

"Forgive me, my Lady," said mademoiselle, carefully shutting the door; "but I can keep silence no longer. For several days past, Lady Sophia has been out of spirits and languid; and I who know her every look and gesture, discovered immediately that something was wrong, and

begged her to tell me the cause of so extraordinary a change."

"I have seen no change in her," said Lady De Verney, wholly at a loss to imagine what the governess meant.

"In your presence, and in society, she has forced herself to appear as cheerful as usual; but when alone, she is constantly in tears. By dint of prayers and entreaties, I have at length got from her the secret grief that is breaking her heart, but upon an express promise that I would not disclose it to you."

"I trust, mademoiselle," said Lady De Verney, "you know your duty better than to keep any thing that comes to your knowledge in this house secret from me; and, least of all, any thing that concerns Lady Sophia."

"I hope your ladyship has had proofs enough of my zeal not to doubt that."

"Well, but come, tell me what is the cause

of Sophia's sorrow. You keep me in painful suspense."

"It is that she has fixed her affections upon one who can never return them, and the certain conviction of this, and the impossibility of mastering her passion, are breaking her heart."

"Nonsense! don't tell me of breaking hearts. Who ever heard of a girl like Sophia dying of a broken heart? She is a simpleton, and you are no better. She will have forgotten her love by the day after to-morrow."

"I fear not;—I wish it may be otherwise; but the effect of disappointed passion—the first and strongest passion that she can ever feel—is very different upon such a mind as hers, from that which ordinary people experience. And, as to forgetting it, that is not very likely, when it is recalled to her mind every hour in the day."

"Why, who has she fallen in love with?"

"With Lord William Neville."

"Lord William Neville?"

"Yes, and I have no doubt that but for the presence of Miss Laurimer, of whom I wish to speak with perfect respect, although I confess there is no very cordial feeling between us, that young nobleman would have done justice to Lady Sophia's beauty and merit, which are in every respect superior to those possessed by the object of his choice."

Lady De Verney made no answer. Surprise and anger, and a crowd of conflicting feelings agitated her bosom. If wishes could have killed, poor Emmeline would not have enjoyed one moment's existence, so fervently did her aunt wish for her destruction. At length the storm burst, and her passion was vented in a torrent of passionate invective

against her niece, herself, and every body else upon whom she could, in however remote a degree, attach any thing like blame.

Mademoiselle, who of course came in for her share, because she had not foreseen and prevented Lord William Neville's offer to Emmeline, crouched under the furious blast, and was too wise to offer a word in justification of herself, against so extraordinary a charge. She took, however, advantage of a pause which ensued when her ladyship had almost exhausted herself, to ask her whether it were not possible that the mischief might yet be remedied.

"How is it possible?" asked Lady De Verney. "Things have gone too far; and, mad as I was, I have been most instrumental in it."

"But people sometimes change their minds," said the governess. "Is it not possible that

Lord William's sudden and violent passion may have as sudden an ending?"

"Possible it is, but hardly probable. However, if any thing can be done, I will do it. Fortunately Lord William is away from town for a week. Much may be done in a week, properly employed. Do you go, mademoiselle, and comfort Sophia. Tell her to keep up her spirits; if any thing can be devised to thwart this detestable match, it shall be tried."

Mademoiselle withdrew, and instantly apprised the Count of the success of her first step in their notable scheme. Ragotzky was on the alert, and followed it up on the instant by a note to Lady De Verney, in which, with an affected mixture of respect and vehemence, he begged permission to speak to her on a matter of deep interest as soon as possible.

"The Count is a clever man," said her ladyship; "it is possible he may suggest some

means of getting rid of the difficulty that besets us. I wish he would run away with Emmeline," she added, as she sealed an answer to the Count's note, in which she expressed her readiness to see him as early as he chose to call.

CHAPTER IV.

"—— Dangers that we see,
To threaten ruin, are with ease prevented."

DUKE OF MILAN.

LADY DE VERNEY could not of course entertain the most distant notion of what was the subject of Ragotzky's visit to her; and hearty as was the wish she had expressed, she had not the least reason to expect that it would be fulfilled. Her astonishment and satisfaction therefore, at learning from the Count that he was desirous of securing her interest and favour in his suit to Emmeline, were for a moment overpowering.

Ragotzky, who understood perfectly the character of her ladyship, affected the most ungovernable passion for her niece; talked of the whole happiness of his life being involved in its success, and, with a flood of sentimental nonsense, implored her to assist him. He described in glowing colours the advantages which Emmeline might derive from marrying him; assured Lady De Verney that the proscription under which he suffered must shortly be removed through the interest of his friends, and that he should be restored to the enjoyment of his fortune, which he took care to describe as very large.

Lady De Verney, who never for a moment doubted his earnestness, and who was too much interested in thinking of the opportunity which the Count's proposal might afford her of securing Lord William Neville's affections for her daughter, listened with a satisfaction she could

not conceal. She, however, thought it proper to suggest to him the possibility that Emmeline might not be inclined to be moved by his admiration.

Ragotzky expressed himself content to run the risk of this chance, and flattered himself that he should be able to convince the young lady of the ardour and sincerity of his attachment.

"But what will Lord William Neville think of this interference with his plans?" said her ladyship. "And what will he say if he finds that, after having insisted on Emmeline's accepting his offer, I should endeavour to make her change her determination?"

"I by no means wish," replied Ragotzky, "that your ladyship should take any very decided part in the matter; at least not publicly. If you will only permit me to have access to Miss Laurimer, in such a way as may enable

me to plead my own cause, and if you will give my pretensions such assistance as you will be able to do without appearing to be my advocate, I am content to rely upon my own exertions for the rest. As for Lord William Neville, he may probably at first be very angry, but he must be convinced that I shall not care for his resentment; and if Miss Laurimer does me the honour to accept my humble offer, his pride will soon induce him to desist from a pursuit upon which he seems to have entered somewhat rashly."

This observation quieted Lady De Verney's only scruples. Emmeline's happiness was a subject that never once engaged her attention. The principles of honour and delicacy, which ought to have prompted her to an indignant rejection of the Count's insolent pretension, had no influence over her mind, which was at once mean and haughty—sordid and selfish.

All that she desired was to see her daughter Duchess of Wellingborough ; and all she thought of was the method by which that desire might be consummated, without once regarding its propriety. She therefore promised the Count all the assistance that she could afford him, without compromising her own consistency—her notions of consistency being confined to the possibility of her duplicity being detected.

Ragotzky threw himself at her feet in a theatrical attitude, and uttered his thanks with most moving vehemence. Among his other accomplishments, he possessed the useful art of appearing to shed tears, and had found its great efficacy in seconding the impostures he had so long and successfully practised. He had never before seen it operate more forcibly, for even Lady De Verney, who would have

seen the whole world perish around her without one throb, unless for her own personal interests, was affected to weeping at the Count's well dissembled sensibility.

Having accomplished his purpose, the Count for the present withdrew; and her ladyship, having summoned Mademoiselle Blache, imparted to her with infinitely greater condescension than she had ever before practised, the purport of his communication. Mademoiselle, who was prepared for it, acted her part to perfection; congratulated Lady De Verney upon the chance which now offered of healing the sorrows of the desponding Lady Sophia, and of realising the most sanguine hopes of her mother. Lady De Verney then had an interview with her daughter, in which she saved her from the embarrassment of making any explanation of the state of her feelings towards

Lord William Neville, by telling her that mademoiselle had already acquainted her with the whole affair.

"It is vain to speak of what is past, my love," said her ladyship, "but you were very wrong not to confide in me. I am sure my indulgence, and the affection you know I feel for you, ought to have convinced you that I think of nothing so much as of your happiness. If I had known earlier that you had thought at all of Lord William Neville, I would have effectually prevented his commencing an engagement with Miss Laurimer, by sending her out of the way. All may however yet turn out well. Follow my advice in all things, and I shall yet have the satisfaction of seeing you Duchess of Wellingborough before I die."

It was well for Lady Sophia that her mother relieved her from the necessity of speaking, or she would in all probability have exposed the

artifice in which she had been engaged to take a share. All that she did was to throw herself into Lady De Verney's arms, and thank her for the consoling assurances she gave her. All traces of her dissembled despondency were immediately removed, and Lady De Verney was gratified by observing that her daughter's unclouded brow, and undiminished gaiety, gave sufficient proof of her confidence in the management of so staunch a friend.

The task of introducing the subject to Emmeline was one of much more difficulty and delicacy. Lady De Verney had no reason to think, from the manner in which her niece had received her former communication, that she was very deeply attached to Lord William Neville. If it had been otherwise, the thought that Emmeline's happiness might be prejudiced by the scheme she had in contemplation, would not have induced her to desist from put-

ting it in practice; but she felt that Emmeline's good sense and penetration would at once detect her real intentions, if she appeared desirous of influencing her choice between the two declared lovers, and she therefore resolved simply to announce the fact of the Count De Ragotzky having proposed for her, and to affect to leave the decision to her own choice. Having thus arranged the plan of her own conduct, she sought her niece, her face dressed in the sweetest smiles she could assume, and with an air of kindness she had never before worn when addressing to Emmeline.

"Upon my word, my dear," said Lady De Verney to her, in a playful tone, "I must have you married out of hand, if it were only to preserve my own quiet."

Emmeline looked up, not less astonished at the expressions of her aunt than at the unusual amenity of her manner.

"Nay, my dear, 'tis to no purpose," pursued her ladyship, "that you put on that look of innocent surprise. I mean exactly what I say."

"I shall be very sorry," said Emmeline, "if my marriage interferes with your ladyship's quiet; but pray tell me what it is you mean, that I may avoid it, if possible?"

"What I mean is, that your provokingly handsome face, and all the amiable qualities you possess," replied Lady De Verney, "are turning the heads of half the young men about town; and that if I don't put you safely into the care of a husband soon, I shall have you run away with."

There is a kind of instinct which makes the mind sometimes sensible of the approach of danger before it becomes visible. An indescribable thrill ran through Emmeline's frame as her aunt spoke. She did not know what

she had to fear, but she was certain that some mischievous design lurked under the affected vivacity of Lady De Verney. Her anger she had long learnt not to be alarmed at, but her pretended affection filled her with dread. She made no reply, and waited until her aunt should explain her meaning.

"My dearest Emmeline," said her ladyship, tenderly, "I must leave jesting, and speak as seriously to you as the subject, which is indeed a grave one, requires. I have this morning received a visit from a gentleman who desires to have the honour of making his approaches to you in the character of a lover."

"To me, ma'am!" said Emmeline. "You know it is impossible for me to entertain any such proposal."

"So I told him," replied her ladyship, "but he is one of those persons who will not be satisfied with as plain an answer as I felt it in-

cumbent on me to give him. He knows you have received Lord William Neville's addresses, but he will not believe from any lips but your own that he is therefore to despair of your ever changing your present intentions. At the same time, I must tell you, that he is a person of merit enough to justify him in thinking that, if your affections were disengaged, he might have a chance of inducing you to listen to him."

"Pray, who is this gentleman?" asked Emmeline.

"Now, I might put you to the trouble o guessing," said Lady De Verney, "or at least of affecting not to have understood the silent eloquence of that admiration, which any one else must have observed him to pay you whenever you have met. But I will not be cruel. The gentleman, then, is no other than the Count Ragotzky."

"The Count Ragotzky!" exclaimed Em-

meline; "surely, you jest. I have not exchanged a hundred words with him in my life, and, certainly, I never had any reason to believe that he entertained the slightest regard for *me*."

"The Count is an extremely well-bred man," said Lady De Verney, who observed the emphasis her niece laid on the last word, "and you may have fancied that the civilities he bestows on others—and which I assure you arise from nothing but the manner of foreigners generally—were more than the ordinary expression of politeness. I can inform you, however, from his own authority, and that I take to be conclusive on such a subject, that, among all the beauties he has met, you are the only one that has engaged his earnest affection."

"I am very sorry to hear it," replied Emmeline; "but there is only one thing for me to do."

"What is that one thing?" asked Lady De Verney, with an affectation of curiosity.

"Can your ladyship ask?" said Emmeline. "The course is so simple that it admits of no doubt: an unequivocal refusal of the request of this gentleman. Perhaps, as your ladyship is so good as to have made this communication to me, you will take the additional trouble of telling the Count my determination."

"No; there you must excuse me, my dear Emmeline," said her ladyship. "I have really had care enough on the score of Lord William Neville's offer to you, and have no wish further to mix myself up in any such affairs. Besides, it would be extremely improper, after the part I have already taken, to have anything to say upon the business. You must give your own answer to the Count yourself. But have you, my dear child, bestowed sufficient consideration on a subject so serious?"

"How can such a subject require consideration?" said Emmeline.

"Why!" said her ladyship, "the Count's offer is not one wholly to be despised. If you were disengaged now for example, I should say that a tender of the affections of a young gallant person such as the Count; one who has distinguished himself in arms, who knows the world, who is universally admired, who is possessed of immense wealth, to the enjoyment of which he will soon be restored, of an ancient and honourable family, who proposes to raise you to the rank of Countess, is not only extremely flattering, but highly advantageous. But then you say you are not disengaged. Now remember I give no opinion upon that subject; but I recommend you to examine your own heart. You know it is a very few days ago since you absolutely refused Lord William Neville. If you were then sincere in

that refusal, I should think you cannot have had time to fall very deeply in love with him by this time. Then you know, my dear, that every chance of happiness in matrimony depends upon mutual affection, and if you feel that your own does not entirely correspond with that which Lord William professes for you, you are not so far engaged, but that you may retract. One is not obliged to marry every man that offers himself, solely because he has thought fit to conceive a passion for one. In short I think you ought to deliberate a little upon the Count's proposal, before you reject it; but, beyond this opinion, remember I give no advice.

Emmeline had been too much surprised at the first mention of this matter, to think of anything else. As the conversation proceeded, it had, however, occurred to her, from Lady De Verney's manner, that she must have some

other motive for the part she was acting, than she chose to avow. For her aunt's judgment she had too little respect to attach the slightest weight to any recommendation that might proceed from her; but the insinuating tone of her last speech convinced her, not only that it was from no regard for her happiness, that Lady De Verney had spoken, but that she had in contemplation some scheme which was directed against it. If therefore the subject of their conversation had been an indifferent one, Emmeline would have been cautioned against her; as it was, the simplicity and integrity of her heart did not permit her to pause a moment. She replied calmly that she was very thankful for the solicitude Lady De Verney had expressed in her welfare, and that whenever the Count made, if he should make, any proposal to her, she would answer it so expli-

citly, as would convince him of her determination."

"You must not expect, my dear, that he will be repulsed very easily," said Lady De Verney. "He has too much experience to consider a simple refusal as the extinction of all his hopes. He knows that

"A woman sometimes scorns what best contents her;"

and that in love, as in war, perseverance oftener brings about the victory than a *coup de main*."

"If he is such a person as your ladyship describes him to be," said Emmeline, "that is to say, if he is a person of honour, I do not despair of convincing him that I am quite serious in declining the honour he intends me."

Lady De Verney felt that she had almost exhausted the affectation of good temper which

she had assumed. She would have willingly indulged in that violence of expression that was natural to her; but as she had a point to gain, and as it was necessary to make her niece fancy that the regard she expressed for her was sincere, she controlled her rising inclination. She therefore quitted the room, saying, "Well, my dear, I leave you to think over the matter. At all events, I dare say you will soon hear from the Count."

When relieved from the presence of Lady De Verney, Emmeline gave full vent to the indignation which her conduct had inspired. To waver was impossible. She did not deceive herself so much as to fancy that she was passionately in love with Lord William Neville, but she had too much respect for his disinterested and honourable conduct, to be tempted by any earthly consideration to forfeit the promise she had given him. Of all men this

presumptuous foreigner was the last that she could have brought herself to think of as a lover. The suspicions which Lady Helena had hinted respecting his real character, had been confirmed by all that she had been able to observe of him. She believed him to be an utter impostor, and would have looked upon his offer as an insult, even if she could have thought that it was meant in earnest; but after her late conversation with Lady Sophia, she could not doubt that it was a mere trick to conceal his designs upon her cousin. One doubt alone arose in her mind, which was whether Lady De Verney was really imposed upon, or whether, for some reason which Emmeline could not discover, she was interested in thwarting that union with Lord William Neville, which she had lately advocated with such unseemly warmth. Upon this point, obscure as it was, she did permit herself now to

pause; and having calmed the anger, which she could not help feeling at the unworthy attempt that was made upon her, she awaited the moment of Ragotzky's approach to put her determination into practice.

This opportunity soon occurred: she was summoned by a message from her aunt, whom she found in her boudoir, and with whom was the Count Ragotzky. After a short conversation on indifferent topics, Lady De Verney quitted the room, evidently for the purpose of enabling him to make his intended declaration. Emmeline, who was fully prepared for the scene that was to ensue, listened in calm silence to the Count's announcement of his pretended passion, and when it was concluded, said with a cool dignity, which surprised him, "that she had been informed by her aunt of his intentions; that she regretted he had put her and himself to the pain which this interview must

occasion, but that she begged explicitly to decline the offer he made her."

Ragotzky, whose audacity was extreme, although he neither expected nor wished for a favourable reception, was not prepared for so concise and unequivocal a repulse. Concealing his disappointment as well as he could, he continued to pour out a flood of unmeaning protestations, and practised those artifices which he had often found to succeed on similar occasions. It was all in vain, Emmeline listened with imperturbable calmness to all that he had to say, and when he had exhausted his fluent stock of common-place rhetoric, she arose, and, without making any reply, quitted the room.

Ragotzky's vanity was piqued. There was not the slightest meaning or sincerity in any thing he had said, and yet such was the opinion he had of his own merit, that he could not forgive Emmeline for the unconcealed scorn

with which she had treated him. It was necessary for the completion of his design that he should keep up the appearance of the passion he had feigned, and he had now the additional inducement of mortifying and annoying her for the slight regard in which she had held his offer. When Lady De Verney returned, he informed her of the ill success of his first attempt, but expressed his determination to persist, and by the most assiduous pursuit to endeavour to soften the inflexibility of her relative. Lady De Verney approved of his intention, and promising him all the assistance she could afford, and all the influence she could exert in favour of his suit, these two amiable personages parted for the present.

CHAPTER V.

"An honest tale speeds best, being plainly told."

SHAKSPEARE.

EMMELINE was habitually an early riser, and the quietest and happiest moments that she passed were commonly those which she enjoyed alone, and before the other members of her uncle's family had quitted their pillows. She usually spent some hours every morning in the library, where she could pursue her occupations, or indulge in reflection uninterrupted by the tedious and heartless society of her relatives. She was sitting here, engaged in

writing to Lady Helena, on the morning after her conversation with the Count Ragotzky, when the door was suddenly opened, and one of the servants, who did not know she was there, shewed a gentleman into the room.

"Lord Redhurst is not at home at present," said the man, "and his coming in is extremely uncertain."

"I have an appointment with him at the house," said the stranger, "and I have no doubt he will be here shortly. At all events I will wait a short time."

The footman placed a seat for him and withdrew with an air which seemed to imply that the stranger had much greater confidence in his young master's punctuality than those who knew him better had ever entertained.

There was something in the sound of the stranger's voice that struck familiarly upon Emmeline's ear: she endeavoured to recollect

where she had heard it, in vain, and looking up from her writing, she saw that he had taken up a book from the table at which he was sitting, and which he held so as to conceal his features. He, however, almost immediately changed his position, and she then recognised him to be that Mr. Loudun, whom she had seen with Sir Henry Daverout at Guyden Castle. She approached him immediately, and addressing him by his name, expressed her satisfaction at seeing him.

Mr. Loudun said he was about to inquire for her, having heard that she was a resident in Lord De Verney's house, but that he had no expectation of finding her up at so early an hour.

"You speak," said Emmeline, "with reference to London habits, when you call this so early an hour. It is now nearly ten o'clock, but you must surely recollect that at Guyden

Castle, we should have called it rather a late one."

"True," said Mr. Loudun, "but I thought you had been long enough in this gay town to have forgotten customs so unfashionable as those which prevailed there."

"Then you give up all pretensions on your own part," said Emmeline, "to being considered fashionable, since you are abroad at this time."

"I am a man of business," replied Mr. Loudun, "and it is in the pursuit of my avocations that I am here at this time to meet Lord Redhurst."

"But tell me," said Emmeline, "have you received any intelligence from Sir Henry Daverout, whose silence makes me feel uneasy?"

"I received a packet of his letters yesterday, from the India House, among which is one for

you," was his reply, and he produced it as he spoke.

Emmeline took it eagerly from his hands, and was about to open it instantly, when Lord Redhurst entered. He was pale, and looking ill, and, from his dress and appearance, it was evident he had not been in bed. He seemed surprised at seeing Emmeline in company with Mr. Loudun.

"I have found in this gentleman," said Emmeline, "an old acquaintance, and a friend of Sir Henry Daverout, from whom he has just brought me a letter; and, as I conclude that you and he have business together, I dare say you will readily dispense with my company."

Lord Redhurst assented, and Emmeline quitted the room. As she went out she heard her cousin ask, in a tone of eagerness, whether Mr. Mortimer had returned; but the door was

closed before she could collect Mr. Loudun's reply. She could think of nothing but her letter, and hastened to her own chamber, wherewith mingled tears of surprise and joy, she read the following communication:—

"From Sir Henry Daverout to Miss Laurimer.

"I am but just returned to Madras, and, with inexpressible grief, learn the heavy loss you have sustained. I could pity you, my dear Miss Laurimer, but that I rather require your pity for myself: you can never feel what I do on this melancholy occasion. You have lost an aunt, indeed, who reared and loved you with the anxious tenderness of a mother: a firm friend, a wise and steady guide, a bright paragon of female excellence, who, severe to herself and gentle to others, enforced the beauty of virtue, not by sentimental phrases, but by the calm

dignity of undeviating rectitude—unswerving principle. This is, indeed, much to lose, and *you* know it is not half what she deserved. Ah! forgive me if my selfish tears fall not for you. You will find other aunts—fresh guides: you will love other people, and attach yourself to the world by ties that will make your earlier ones hang loosely on your memory. But, in the grave of Maddalena are buried all my first feelings of youthful passion and blissful hopes. I have lost the companion of my childhood, the mistress of my youth, the friend of my riper years! Where the soul is deeply wounded, how light and unmeaning are words! I cannot tell you all I suffer—I would not if I could. Brighter prospects are opening on you, my young friend. I will not dash with bitterness the cup of joy that is presented you. I have found a parent for you. The long lost Frederick Laurimer will be restored to the

country of his fathers, to the heart of his child, and to the ashes of his sister! Oh, why was she not permitted again to embrace her loved Frederick! But I must not repine. Enclosed you will find a note from your father, by which you will see how shortly he intends being in England. I will now tell you the steps I took towards discovering him, and the accident by which I succeeded in my search.

"When last I wrote I could give no account of the object of my anxious inquiries, and, indeed, began to feel very despondent about them altogether. I had exhausted enquiry, every source of information, and even of conjecture. At last it occurred to me that Mr. Laurimer might have gone so far up the country as to preclude the possibility of communication with any of the towns belonging to the English settlements, and I ascertained that there had been instances of some of our coun-

trymen having done this, and of their existence having been discovered long after their connexions and friends had supposed them to be dead. It was, at first sight, unnatural that he should thus willingly abandon the correspondence of his sister, but, on mature reflection, I could not help persuading myself that the apparent indifference of Lady Maddalena towards his idolized Louisa might have revolted a mind irritable from warm feelings, and a sense of ill-treatment. His mother's barbarous conduct would have soured the gentlest of tempers; at least it could not fail to weaken his confidence in his fellow creatures. Ruminating on these things, and clinging to the faintest hopes, I travelled many thousand miles over this burning country, until I was assured we were no longer in the English territories. My spirits began to sink at this intelligence; and the heat of the climate, the inconvenient

and, to me, novel manner of my travelling, and perhaps the anxiety I suffered from the disappointment of my hopes, brought on an illness, which alarmed my attendants. The disorder is so rapid in this country, that they well knew to attempt carrying me to any town would be vain. My palanquin-bearers struck into a wood that we had been skirting. My people dispersed to gather me cooling fruits, and erect me a tent in the most shady part, as well as that most easily guarded from wild beasts. They presently returned, with demonstrations of joy: they had found a building in the wood, and the person to whom it appeared to belong, had desired the sick person might be conveyed thither immediately. The people of the wood were of the class of Vaisy;* they

* The principal Orders or Classes of Indians are:—

The Brâhman, or sacerdotal order.

The Cshatriya, or civil and military. The princes are of this class.

The

were kind, though unpolished; and were so well acquainted with the nature of the disease that had attacked me, and with the manner of treating, that I was much more fortunate in being under their care, than if I had fallen into the hands of Europeans, whose skill is often baffled by the peculiarity of the disorders incident to this climate. The violence of the symptoms soon abated; but it was long before I was sufficiently recovered to think of prosecuting my journey.

The person who nursed me could speak a few words of French. He gave me to understand the house belonged to a great man, an European, and a native, as he believed, of France; who did not reside in it, but occasionally spent a few days in a part of the edifice that was then locked up. When I was a little

The Sûdra, or those filling the lower offices of life.

Artisans are called Banun-Shanker; and there is likewise a class for expelled criminals, called Chandelas.

recovered, I asked if I might be permitted to see every part of the house. My nurse took me through the tenanted part first, and then to that of the master's apartments, which consisted of a bed chamber and study; at the end of which was an octagonal room very high and lighted from the top. It was paved with white marble, and in the centre was a monument of the same material, with pillars of spar at the four corners. Curious to discover what this singular ornament could be, I approached near, and saw with astonishment not to be expressed, this inscription in English:—

Beneath this stone rests in peace
the Body of
MARIE DE SOLLIVAN.
She was merciful and will experience Mercy.
Transplanted to her native skies,
She left
Frederick and Albert,
To weep o'er her grave,
emulate her conduct,
and
envy her fate.

I could not help feeling strongly interested in the being this monument commemorated and the survivors, without being able to account even to myself for the desire I had to know more respecting them. I sought to gain some intelligence from my conductor; she could tell me nothing more, than that the lady buried there was wife to the master of the house. I returned to the study, endeavouring to make out something of this gentleman. The books were marked either with the names of Frederick, Mary, or Albert. I examined each volume with care; at last, on a top shelf, behind some lumbering folios, I found an English bible. I felt now sure of knowing more; and I was right; for on opening it, I beheld, inscribed on the first page, the name of Maddalena Laurimer! with the De Verney arms beneath.

I uttered a cry of surprise and joy, which

alarmed my conductor. To be successful at the very moment when all hope had forsaken me was indescribable delight. I lost no time in causing myself to be conveyed to the usual residence of the proprietor of the house, whom I could no longer doubt was your father, and had the satisfaction of finding all my toil and trouble repaid, by learning that it was he of whom I was in search—that it was your long lost father! He received me with the independent urbanity of a benevolent and noble being, courteous from the refinement of feeling, not the cold varnish of conventional politeness. He appeared struck with my name, but not instantly to know on whom to fix it. I told him I had looked forward for many years to the present moment with the greatest pleasure, as that in which I was to become acquainted with the brother of my

most loved and admired friend, Lady Maddelena Guyden.

"'Guyden,' he repeated, with emotion, 'is she then married?'

"'She has lost her husband,' I replied.

"'Poor thing, poor thing,' said he, in a disturbed voice. 'I am sorry for her sufferings,' he continued, in a low tone and abstracted air, as if speaking to himself, 'although she beheld mine without sympathy, with indifference!'

"These words convinced me I had been right in my conjectures, and therefore I gently led him to speak of former times. I perceived he had no notion of your existence, and I dreaded to enter on the subject. I talked of India, of the singular and contradictory accounts we had received of the natives—of the glorious termination of the contest with

Tippoo Sultan—of the exemplary administration of Lord Wellesley.

"Mr. Laurimer expressed himself on these subjects like one who knows and feels them. Adopting the energetic and figurative expressions of the country in which he had so long lived, he happily blended them with the clear perspicuity and manly dignity of the English diction. At once strongly attracted and powerfully impressed by a conversation such as I had never before heard, I could not prevail on myself to interrupt your father. Although alive to every feeling that was great and noble, he appeared to have shaken off those painful ones that dictated the inscription to his wife. I trembled to recall long banished emotions, and to divide his heart between India and England. I approached the subject by expressing my surprise that an Englishman of his talents and information should voluntarily

exclude himself from all society with his countrymen. A shade of discomfort passed over his brow and he replied—

"'I see people of all nations here; as many as I wish. There is no liberty in towns; in maritime ones there is corruption and discord. Superstition and fanaticism reign triumphant; the furious priest of Brahma and the bigotted missionary vow eternal hatred and opposition to each other; the wily politician takes advantage of their broils to establish the influence of his master, whether French, English, or Portuguese. One man dupes his neighbour, and is himself duped in his turn. The desire to amass wealth hardens the heart and degrades the mind of half the creation: the glory of the British character is sullied by the insatiable cupidity of some of her degenerate sons. If I cannot love my fellow men, I wish not to despise them. I quitted the seat of li-

centious depravity and gloomy barbarism to breathe the pure air of heaven, untainted with the vices of men, and to devote myself to the comfort of an inoffensive people; virtuous and hospitable in their moral construction, gentle yet brave in their nature, and mild in their prejudices, to a degree that might raise the blush of shame in a less tolerating Christian.'

"I ventured to hint at what his sister had suffered on losing sight of him so entirely. His countenance completely darkened—'Mere abstracted feelings,' he replied, with quickness, 'did not banish me to these remote regions. They were peculiar and painful ones, such as I wish not to recall.'

"He arose, and walking from me, stopt opposite an inscription, on which he fixed his eyes with a sigh. I had not observed it before, and looking accurately, perceived it to be a sentence from Thrĕĕshnā, the sense of which

was, 'The heart that followeth the dictates of the moving passions, carrieth away reason, as the storm the bark on the raging ocean.'

"Your father turned about, and perceiving curiosity in my looks, said mournfully, 'That inscription was placed there by a benign and exemplary being who has long been at rest. It was intended as a warning to my son, and is unfortunately too often necessary to his father. I do not often talk of myself,' he added, in a voice that strove to be calm, 'but you have claims on me which no other human being has. You were the benefactor of Louisa!' I seized this opening to explain myself. I cannot describe to you the delighted surprise and agitation with which he first heard of your existence. Not a day passes without his questioning me about you. When I told him you had your mother's eyes, his own were suffused with tears. When he first learnt the injustice he

had done his sister, his impatience to set out instantly, and implore her forgiveness, was not to be controlled. The shock his impetuous nature sustained by your letter which we found at Madras, I will not dwell upon. The same vessel that, nineteen years ago, had brought Mr. Laurimer the afflicting intelligence of the death of your mother, conveyed to him at the same time, a lively letter from Lady Maddalena, describing a rural fête, at which she had assisted, and containing not one word of Louisa! From that moment Mr. Laurimer determined that all intercourse between him and his sister should cease. He had heard no particulars of Louisa's death. The public papers announced it, and a few lines of condolence from a person with whom he was slightly acquainted, and who wrote to recommend a relation to his notice, confirmed it. He solicited and obtained an employment up the

country, where he became acquainted with a French planter, a man of amiable character, who had served in almost every quarter of the globe, with distinguished honour. Shocked at the enormities committed under the sanguinary reign of Robespierre, Louis de Sollivan quitted his profession, relinquished the dreams of liberty his youthful fancy had depicted, and converting all his property into money, retired with his infant daughter to the interior of the empire of Mogul. A similarity of disposition connected your father with M. de Sollivan in a strict friendship, which made him forget in some degree the sorrows and disappointments he had endured. He has given me a most interesting account of this exemplary and superior man, with which I will not burthen my present communication, and which you will hear at greater length from your father. The daughter of Monsieur de Sollivan

grew in gracefulness and beauty, and your father conceived an attachment for her which induced him to ask her in marriage. There was but one obstacle to this. She had been the only solace of her father's existence during the whole of his voluntary exile, and he could not endure the thought of parting with her. The place in which he had fixed his dwelling was but a short distance beyond the confine of the British territory; but still it was far enough to prevent the daily intercourse of the friends. Your father had amassed very considerable wealth in a country which abounds with riches, and which at the period of his arrival in it had not been so plentifully plundered as it has since, by the depredations of European avarice. Monsieur de Sollivan had also become very rich by the commerce in which he had engaged. The employment which your father held, although a highly lu-

crative one, was not a sufficient inducement to him to forego the prospect of the happiness that lay before him. He therefore renounced it, removed out of the English dominions, and became the husband of his friend's daughter. After a few years passed in uninterrupted happiness, she died, and her father did not long survive her. Of this marriage there is only one child, Albert, who is in Italy at present, whither Mr. Laurimer judged it advisable to send him, under the care of a French Abbé, a cousin of his mother's. 'He seems very anxious about this young man, if such he may be called at sixteen.' Albert is of so impetuous and ungovernable a disposition, that your father would not permit him to remain longer among slaves and dependants. He has now written to desire he will join him in England, where, by associating with his equals and superiors, and attaching himself to his

sister, he will not fail of becoming every thing Mr. Laurimer can wish. I will not add a useless word to this immoderate epistle, but conclude by assuring you how sincerely I am,

"Your affectionate friend, and

"Most devoted humble servant,

"HENRY DAVEROUT."

It would be impossible to describe the various and powerful feelings that agitated Emmeline during the perusal of this letter. The conviction that her father was living, the realization of the hopes which she had never abandoned, and which, although sometimes faint and distant, had been always her greatest consolation under the mortifying reverses to which she had been exposed since the death of Lady Maddalena, filled her with a joy that was almost overpowering. With tears of delight she confessed the mercy and goodness of

heaven, and humbly returned her thanks to that power by which her father had been preserved. Sir Henry Daverout too received a share of her thankfulness, and if Lord William Neville had not been in the way, and Sir Henry had been present to urge in person his former suit, Emmeline felt that it would have been hard to destroy, by a repetition of her former refusal, the happiness of one to whom she now owed so much. But human happiness is seldom permitted to be of long continuance, and even with the sweetest joys that man is permitted to taste, some bitterness is fated to be mingled. Upon looking at the date of Sir Henry Daverout's letter, she saw that, according to the common course of events, that it ought to have reached this country much earlier. He spoke in it of Mr. Laurimer as being then about to sail for England; if he had done so, Emmeline was surprised

that she should not have heard of him. Doubts assailed her, and, in spite of the resolution she made, not to yield to gloomy superstitions, she could not help shuddering at the thought of the innumerable perils and hazards which always attend so long a voyage as that her father would have to make, and the dread that she might only have ascertained his existence to weep over his loss. She was, however, not of a temper to look only on the darker side of the picture which her fancy presented, but, making a powerful effort to chase away the imaginary terrors that her fancy had created, she determined not to make one step forward to meet misfortunes, which, if they were to come at all, would come soon enough.

When she had recovered, in some degree, from the bewildering sensations which the perusal of Sir Henry's letter had occasioned, it occurred to her that it was incumbent upon

her to inform Lord De Verney that his brother was alive, and that he might soon expect to see him. With the intention of discharging this task she descended to the breakfast parlour, where she found her uncle; and having merely stated the principal fact which it contained, she put Sir Henry Daverout's letter into his hands.

"God bless my soul! my dear," said the Peer, "you don't mean to say that poor Frederick is still alive!" and Emmeline imagined that amidst the surprise that her uncle evinced, there was a much smaller portion of joy than she thought such a circumstance ought to have excited.

"Thank Heaven!" replied Emmeline, her eyes filling with tears, "he is alive, and I trust he will soon be in England."

"Well, that is the most extraordinary thing in the world," said Lord De Verney, talking to

himself, but loud enough to be heard by any one present; "but why did he not write to us? why did he not tell us where he was, and all about it? He knows I had the greatest regard for him; but how could I give him any proof of it, if he would go and hide himself in a place where it was impossible for me to receive any tidings of him?"

Emmeline replied only by again offering her uncle Sir Henry's letter. He glanced over it, and finding that it consisted of several sheets of paper, returned it to her, indolence being a far more powerful principle with him than curiosity.

"I see, my dear, it is a private letter," he said, affecting a delicacy he did not feel, to conceal that sluggish aversion from exertion, to which half his life was sacrificed; "and as I have no wish to learn secrets—above all, a lady's secrets—I will thank you to tell me the

purport of such parts of it as relate to my brother Frederick."

"The letter contains no secrets," replied Emmeline; "and it relates wholly to my father."

She then told her uncle the particulars of Sir Henry's communication, to which he listened attentively, and with as much interest as he could feel for anything; but which, like a philosopher as he was, he did not permit to interfere with the important ceremonies of breakfast. Putting a question occasionally, and throwing in an interjection, Lord De Verney arrived at the end of his morning meal, and at the certainty that his only brother, whom he had for many years given up for dead, was alive, and well, and prosperous, at about the same moment. It would be bootless to inquire which conclusion gave him the greater satisfaction.

"Poor Frederick!" he ejaculated. "Lucky

upon the whole though. He has got very rich, they say; and, although he has had two wives, he has had the good fortune to outlive——"

The opening of the parlour door and the entrance of Lady De Verney, cut short the more sincere than civil termination of his speech, which her lord had intended. Emmeline had to repeat the joyful news, and to receive her congratulations on the event, which were so civilly expressed, that a mere bystander would never have doubted that they were sincere, and might have thought her ladyship really as amiable as she affected to be.

In the intimation that Mr. Laurimer was about to return, she, however, saw the possibility of danger to her schemes. To impose upon him, as she still hoped she might be able to do upon Emmeline, would be impossible. If he arrived before the Count had succeeded, or before Lord William was detached from his

present pursuit, he would demolish the whole project at a single breath. As she looked at Emmeline, and saw her beautiful features, infinitely more beautiful by the glow which joy had thrown over them, and by the sanguine hope which sparkled in her eyes, she could not help thinking that a more formidable rival to Lady Sophia's pretensions could scarcely be found. She determined therefore to hasten as much as possible the execution of her design, and as Lord William Neville was likely to be away from London for some days longer, she trusted that before his return she should have made such progress as would disencourage him from further thinking of Emmeline; the first step, as she wisely calculated, towards securing him for her own daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

"On se reserve toujours quelque point secret, qu'on ne veut, ou qu'on ne peut honnêtement communiquer."

LADULFI.

FROM the moment that Lady De Verney had received the Count's declaration, a much closer degree of intimacy had prevailed between them than before. He was a much more frequent visitor, and was admitted at times which had been hitherto commonly kept sacred from the intrusion of visitors. Scarcely an evening passed that he was not there, and he was never there without playing the humble, but not despairing lover to Emmeline. Of all the

artifices by which gentlemen of his description succeed in making themselves very interesting, he was a perfect master. Sighs, which seemed to come from the profoundest depths of his heart, glances fixed with intense admiration upon Emmeline, and a look of utter abstractedness to all besides, with an occasional interjection, expressive of his devotion and his suffering, she was compelled to suffer. At first this pantomime which the Count Ragotzky played off, annoyed her excessively; but since the receipt of Sir Henry Daverout's letter, her spirits had experienced so great a relief, that she looked upon the Count's persecutions with indifference. Sometimes indeed she was tempted to smile at the gross absurdity of his grimaces, and to pity the infatuation, as well as to censure the want of delicacy which marked Lady De Verney's conduct; but she repressed this inclination, and determined to

await patiently until the arrival of her father should free her from a thraldom at once so ridiculous and so tormenting.

Lord William Neville returned, and flew, with all the ardour of true affection, to meet Emmeline. She had much to communicate to him. The news relating to her father delighted him, because he saw that it conferred happiness on her whose happiness was the first wish of his heart. There was another circumstance to announce to him, and that Emmeline felt was one which she would willingly have been spared. It was not that she feared for herself, she had no reason to believe that Lord William Neville would suppose for a moment that the pretensions of such a man as the Count Ragotzky, could excite any other feeling than contempt in her mind; but she apprehended that his anger at the impertinence of this foreigner's intrusion might prompt him to some act

of violence which she was most desirous of avoiding. There was, however, no choice for her, and she was convinced that, unless she compromised her own sincerity, she must inform him of all that happened respecting this disagreeable matter. She felt that Lord William's conduct towards her had deserved the fullest confidence, and she, therefore, told him without reserve, all that had passed between her and Lady De Verney, and of the persecutions she had since endured.

As she expected, the impetuous young man was enraged beyond measure at the conduct both of the Count and of Lady De Verney, and vowed in the first transport of his anger that he would make them both bitterly repent it.

Emmeline was desirous of preventing any open quarrel, for many reasons. She could not think without horror of Lord William's ex-

posing himself in a personal conflict with the Count, which would, of necessity, put his life in peril, and in which he could gain no honour. She naturally shrunk from the idea of being the cause of such a quarrel. She did not wish to have any contention with Lady De Verney, for whose character her dislike and contempt increased daily, and whose house she determined to quit, on the first opportunity; and she was particularly desirous that Lady Sophia, who she believed to be deeply implicated in the schemes of the Count, should not suffer in happiness or reputation by the exposure which must attend a rupture. She therefore, applied herself to calm her lover's indignation, and at length succeeded at least in making him listen to her persuasions.

"But," he said, "it is impossible that this Ragotzky can have any serious design in the

offer he makes. Nobody knows any thing about him, but still nobody believes the account he gives of himself. That he is a mere adventurer, and that his design is to impose upon somebody, I have not the least doubt; but what can he propose to himself by offering himself as your suitor?"

"Upon my word," replied Emmeline, laughing, "that is a much less gallant saying than I expected from you. You think it impossible for me to have made an impression on the heart of this person, whom Lady De Verney thinks so fascinating, that no one having any pretensions to taste, can resist him."

"No, indeed, Emmeline, I did not mean that," replied Lord William Neville; "but what excites my surprise is, that he should venture to propose that which I am confident he could have no intention of carrying into

effect even if there were no obstacle in the way. There must be some concealed fraud which he hopes to accomplish."

"I have no doubt there is," replied Emmeline; but regard for Lady Sophia prevented her from telling Lord William the grounds upon which she had built that opinion. "However," she added, "of this be certain, that nothing which our enemies can devise will have the power to trouble our happiness as far I am concerned, unless you permit yourself to be moved by their unworthy artifices."

Lord William promised the utmost forbearance and circumspection. "But," he added, "although I neither fear nor care for anything that may spring from the source to which you allude, have I not another source of fear? When your father arrives, may his opinion not have some influence on the choice you have made?"

"I hope," replied Emmeline, seriously, "that although I have not hitherto been called upon to exercise the duties of a daughter, I know them well enough not to neglect them; and that I shall never be found wanting in the respect and deference which my newly-found parent will have a right to exact from me; but I owe also duties to myself. My promise to you was made before I knew that any person was in existence who would have had a right to control my choice; and by that promise I feel myself bound so strongly, that no authority can loosen it; nor can I contemplate any objection on the part of my father, when he learns the circumstances under which my promise was plighted."

Lord William kissed the hand which was extended to him as this speech was uttered, and felt so perfect a reliance upon the interest which he had excited in his mistress's heart,

that he resolved to chase from his mind every feeling like suspicion or jealousy, for which his reason convinced him that Emmeline's conduct could never give him the slightest ground. Alas! the resolutions of lovers are often strange miscalculations, and of all other human resolutions the most likely to be overset by the capricious power which rules them.

Mr. Mortimer at about this time again made his appearance in London. Emmeline had derived so much pleasure from his society and conversation, that she had felt his absence as a misfortune, and his return was therefore hailed with delight. She had insensibly, and without being able to account to herself for the habit, become accustomed to discourse with him in a more unreserved manner than she had adopted towards any other person, with the exception of Lady Helena D'Arcy. There was in his behaviour towards her a kindness and

sympathy which no one else displayed, and her affectionate disposition felt all its impulses warmed and excited by the regard which he evinced for her, and which derived an increased value because it proceeded from one with whom her acquaintance was so recent, and on whose goodwill she had no other claim than that which her personal qualities had inspired.

She had much to tell him, and the most dear and important of her communications related to the discovery she had recently made, that her father was living. He listened with an evident interest, which recommended him still more strongly to her, while she detailed to him the circumstances mentioned in Sir Henry Daverout's letter, and expressed, with all the natural eloquence which accompanies true and exalted feeling, the new pleasures that filled her heart at the hope of soon seeing and embracing the parent who was so dear to her,

and who was now the only one of her natural protectors that the insatiable grave had left. Serious and self-possessed as he was in general, he could not refrain from tears, as the sanguine girl described her joyous expectations; and when he told her she deserved the happiness which she was about to enjoy, Emmeline thought of the pleasure she should experience in presenting so kind and estimable a friend to her father.

"And now, what do you say to my predictions?" asked Mr. Mortimer, with an evident effort to repress the emotion he experienced. "Did I not tell you that Sir Henry Daverout's search would succeed, and that your father was still living; and did I not tell you truly?"

"Oh, I will give you credit for the spirit of prophecy, if you will," replied Emmeline; "indeed I am much too happy to dispute anything; but how can it have happened that

Sir Henry Daverout's letters were so late in reaching England?"

"It very often happens," said Mr. Mortimer, "that ships are detained by weather, or by some accident which compels them to put into port. There is, therefore, nothing very surprising that I should have reached England before your friend's packet, although I left India after the date at which it was written. But there are some other circumstances you have to tell me; and, unless I mistake, some very important events have occurred during my absence. When I went away, you were disengaged, and upon my return, unless common report and my own eyes are not to be trusted, I find you engaged to marry Lord William Neville."

Emmeline was above the petty feeling which often induces young ladies to disclaim any knowledge of that which fills their thoughts, and in

a few words she explained to Mr. Mortimer, the exact state of affairs between herself and Lord William. She did not however think it necessary to inform him of the violence which Lady De Verney had displayed on the occasion of his lordship's first proposition, because she had no wish to lower Lady De Verney in her friend's estimation, who she perceived already regarded her aunt with dislike, which he hardly took the trouble to conceal, and because, having accepted Lord William Neville, a feeling of delicacy towards him, prompted her to conceal the hesitation which she felt when his offer was first made to her.

"And this engagement, I presume, was made," said Mr. Mortimer, "before you had any certain knowledge that a parent existed, whose sanction it would have been desirable to obtain before you promised your hand."

"Certainly," replied Emmeline, "and that

circumstance would give me considerable disquietude, if I were not convinced that Lord William Neville's character and conduct justify my choice, and will insure the approbation of my father."

"You will perhaps think me a meddling personage," said Mr. Mortimer, "when I tell you that after having heard of your engagement, I took some pains to ascertain whether your lover was worthy of you; but I shall be pardoned when I add that I think he is such a man as cannot reasonably be objected to."

"I hope you do not believe," said Emmeline, "that I could make so ungrateful a return for the solicitude which such a proceeding displays, as to call you a meddler; and I confess that your approbation gratifies me."

"But," said Mr. Mortimer, "what is the meaning of the Count Ragotzky's attentions to you? He knows that you are the destined

wife of Lord William Neville; how therefore is it that he appears to be paying his court to you? and how is it that he is encouraged, as every one must see he is, by Lady De Verney?"

"Nay, now you propose a question to me," replied Emmeline, "which I am wholly unable to answer. I did not suppose that the extraordinary behaviour of my aunt and of the other person you mention, could escape your observation; but I profess myself wholly unable to account for either." She then related to him all that had taken place on this subject, and did not scruple to express the indignation she felt at the conduct which Lady De Verney had thought proper to pursue.

"Be under no anxiety upon this head," replied Mr. Mortimer, when she had concluded, "your lively friend, Lady Helena, once interrogated me in your presence, about my knowledge of this Count Ragotzky, and I declined

replying. I have still reasons for not telling you all I know about him; but rest satisfied of this, that he has no intention, and if he had, that he has not the power of disturbing your happiness. The annoyance which his civilities may occasion to you, is, I apprehend, not very great; and you had better therefore endure it for a few days longer, beyond which, I assure you, it will not extend."

"I will not do you the injustice to believe that this mystery is assumed without some adequate reason for it," said Emmeline, "but I do assure you that for more than a *very few* days, I shall find it impossible to put up with the impertinence of this man."

"Your forbearance shall be put to as little trial as possible," said Mr. Mortimer, "but for a short time you must do me the favour to exercise it. I have my plans, time is rapidly ripening them, and if you will so far co-operate

with me as to grant my present request, and not ask me what they are, I have no doubt of their success. If I could disclose them to you I would; but I promise you this, that their object is to insure your happiness, and that of those who are dear to you."

"And with this I must rest for the present, contented," said Emmeline.

"Just so," replied Mr. Mortimer. "But now, to change the subject, I must tell you that I have lately seen your friend, Lady Helena."

"Indeed!" said Emmeline. "Where did you see her?"

"At Lord Boughton's seat, at Ratchetts. The course of my late journey led me into the neighbourhood, and I did not choose to quit it without paying my respects to one who is so well worthy of esteem."

"You judge her rightly," said Emmeline,

who was delighted to find that her friend's character was properly appreciated by one, whose good opinion she felt, was real praise.

"At my departure," said he, "she charged me with a letter for you, which I have now the honour to deliver." As he spoke, he handed to her Lady Helena's epistle, and taking his departure, left her to its perusal. It was as follows:—

"Lady HELENA D'ARCY to Miss LAURIMER.

"Ratchetts, Monday Night.

"Tracy, my *dame d'atours*, has left me for the night. The important affairs of my toilette are completed. In half an hour I shall be in bed, and three minutes after that, at the most, I shall be asleep; but that half hour I shall devote to answering your letter, my dear Emmeline. I do pity you in all sincerity. It is a great misfortune for you, no doubt, that

nature should have made you so handsome and amiable, that young gentlemen of taste cannot help falling in love with you; and a still greater misfortune for them that you can marry only one of them. I really do not see any possible means by which those misfortunes can be overcome. A celebrated Irish senator once said that no man could be in two places at once, barring he was a bird; and even without the sanction of so high an authority, I do not know how you can be the Countess Ragotzky, in Poland, and Lady William Neville (or it may be, Duchess of Wellingborough) in England at the same time. So, my dear, you must make up your mind only to accept a part of the honour that is thrust upon you, and marry but one out of two such lovers. But, jesting apart, the news you tell me of this impertinent adventurer, Ragotzky, does excite my surprise. What can the man mean?—After the

little farce which you and I saw played one evening, a short time ago, neither of us can doubt that some affair is going on between him and Lady Sophia. His presumptuous proposition to you, which would in any case be ridiculous, must be an imposture, and I cannot doubt that Lady De Verney is almost the only person who is deceived by it. Of her conduct, I cannot trust myself to speak, because I can find no lady-like terms to characterise my opinion of it. I fear very much, that unless something more fortunate than she deserves shall happen to thwart her very cunning designs, that her own and her daughter's happiness will be seriously injured by the mischievous intrigue to which she so readily lends herself. Of this, however, we will talk more when we meet, and that pleasure, I look forward to, now, in a few days. In the mean time nothing is more easy than to answer the

question you put to me as to the behaviour you ought to adopt towards Monsieur Ragotzky; and, however flattering it may be to me that you ask my advice, I am sure that your own feeling would suggest to you no other than the right course, which is, to treat him with unchangeable calm disdain and silence whenever you can observe it without being positively rude, for that is an honour he is by no means worthy of. I have just had a visit from Mr. Mortimer, who is so good as to take charge of this letter for you. He is a very delightful person, and appears to have a strong notion, for which I honour him, that you and I are two very estimable people; although I am somewhat inclined to quarrel with him for giving you the first place in his regard. I declare, I cannot tell how it is that you make people like you so much, and if I were not bitten with the same infatuation myself, I

should think that they were inexcusable: as it is, I believe there is some sorcery in it, and that, demure as you seem, you are something of a witch. Enough, however, of this.

"You ask me what sort of a life I lead in the country. The most delightful possible. In the first place, my staying here is to please one of the very best fathers in the world, who is thoroughly tired of the town, and finds his chief enjoyment in pursuits, of which, however insipid they may seem to fashionable folks, the greatest recommendation is that they neither tire the mind by too great excitement, nor leave either sorrow or disappointment behind them. Of society, it is true, I have very little. The clergyman and his wife are good enough to make up the whist party which my father is so fond of in the evening; and in the morning my garden and my books help the time along so rapidly that I have never yet had a dull hour.

And then I would have you to know that I am an extremely domestic person when I am removed from the dissipation in which you indulge. I flatter myself that there is not a lady's dairy in all the county so neat and so well kept as mine. I have three Alderney cows, which are perfect jewels in their way, and a poultry yard, the arrangements of which are conducted with a punctuality and decorum that is astonishing, even to myself. You may smile; but I am quite serious when I tell you that I could, without any sacrifice, give up your great town altogether, and sit down quietly for the rest of my life here, if I were sure of having you for a neighbour. I wish therefore you would make haste and marry Lord William Neville, and come and settle somewhere as near to Ratchetts as possible, and learn with me how happy one can be when one is content with simple pleasures. As,

however, I am more disposed to trust to my personal persuasions, than to the eloquence of my letters, I shall be in town at the beginning of the week; until when, adieu.

"Affectionately, and always your

"HELENA."

CHAPTER VII.

"De la Tartarea sua caverna profonda,
La Gelosia pestifera si parte."

MARINO.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lord William's promise to himself, that he would display no impatience at the intrusion of the Count Ragotzky, he could not help feeling considerably annoyed at finding him constantly at Lady De Verney's, and always acting a sort of dumb-show courtship to Emmeline. There was nothing at which he could reasonably take offence in Ragotzky's conduct. He had an indisputable right to look at Miss Laurimer as much and

as often as he chose, and his manner and the tone of his speech to Lord William Neville was so studiously grave and guarded, that it would have been impossible for the most irascible fire-eater in the world to fasten a quarrel on him without being openly in the wrong. With every disposition, therefore, to vent his spleen upon his rival, he was compelled to endure in silence the mortification which it occasioned him. That, however, which reconciled him the most to the somewhat embarrassing position in which he was placed, was his reliance upon Emmeline, and the grave frigidity of demeanour which she observed towards Ragotzky.

She was of all persons the least disposed to that weakness which very well-meaning ladies sometimes indulge in, and which is called by the innocent appellation of flirting. She was not vain enough to be flattered by

the admiration of any persons but those whose worth made them worthy of being pleased, and she was so inexperienced in the ways of the world, that she could not imagine any amusement to exist in tormenting a man who she believed loved her very sincerely. All went on, therefore, very quietly as to outward appearance; but "the course of true love never did run smooth," and Lord William, in spite of his determination to the contrary, was rendered very effectually jealous by one of Lady De Verney's contrivances.

Shortly before this time a young actor of very distinguished talent had appeared at one of the theatres, and succeeded so well in hitting the taste of the town, that he became extremely popular. It was not much in Lady De Verney's way to visit the theatres; they were not sufficiently exclusive for her aristocratic *gout;* but as all the world was talking

of the young tragedian, and as going to see him had become a sort of *vogue*, she at length expressed her intention of descending from her altitude so far as to honour Drury Lane with her presence. Emmeline was very well pleased to hear this. Her taste was either so unfashionable or so unsophisticated, that she derived great delight from theatrical representations, and was one of those good-natured critics who are satisfied with being pleased, without inquiring too curiously why they are, or whether they ought to be so. The new actor had, besides, acquired his fame in some of the best characters of Shakspeare's plays; and with these, although Emmeline had seen few of them acted, she had been long familiar, and had read them all with the eager enthusiasm which they, more than any other poems of our language, are capable of inspiring. She had expressed her satisfaction at Lady De

Verney's proposed visit in the presence of Lord William Neville. On the following morning he procured a box, and brought the card to Lady De Verney. Emmeline had gone out with Lady Sophia at the moment of Lord William's visit. Her aunt suddenly imagined that an opportunity was here presented for creating that jealousy on his lordship's part which she thought would most effectually help that rupture between the lovers, which she had resolved to bring about. She, therefore, declined this offered civility, with an abundance of thanks, on the score of Emmeline's suffering under a trifling indisposition from cold, which she thought rendered it imprudent for her to be out at night. His lordship tried in vain to induce her to change this determination. Very civil, very much obliged to him, but still, inflexible as adamant, Lady De Verney adhered to her refusal

grounding it wholly upon her solicitude for Emmeline's health, and at length succeeded in convincing his lordship, if not of her sincerity, at least of her pertinacity.

Lord William retired, vexed that Emmeline was deprived of an amusement for what he took to be a mere caprice of Lady De Verney's, for the story about Emmeline's cold he knew was untrue. As soon as he had departed, her ladyship, in pursuance of her Macchiavellian plan, wrote a note to the Count De Ragotzky, the result of which was, that shortly before the hour for going to the theatre he presented himself at Lady De Verney's, with a card for a box, which he offered to Emmeline, who was totally ignorant that Lord William's offer had been rejected by her aunt.

Emmeline at once declined to receive the proffered ticket from Ragotzky.

"Nonsense," said Lady De Verney, "you

know you said you wished very much to go to the theatre."

"That is very true," said Emmeline, "but I should not like to go to-night."

"Really, one does not know what to do with the caprices of young ladies now-a-days," said her ladyship impatiently, "but I suppose it is some very refined scruple that prompts Miss Laurimer's refusal; so, if you please, Monsieur le Comte, you shall give me the ticket."

The Count bowed, and obeyed. Her ladyship rang the bell, ordered the carriage, and telling her daughter and her niece to send for their shawls, said she would take them.

Emmeline saw it was in vain to resist. Her aunt would not, she knew, listen to any excuse. She was always desirous to avoid, when she could do so by any personal concession, the consequences of Lady De Verney's stormy

temper; and, besides, to tell the truth, she had some inclination to go to the theatre. She, therefore, hastened her preparations, and the party found themselves, in a few minutes, in one of the private boxes of Drury Lane theatre.

If Emmeline had had the slightest reason to suspect what had passed in her absence, and which her aunt had studiously concealed from her, nothing would have induced her to visit the theatre, because she would have been aware that to do so would have been to give pain to Lord William Neville. As it was, she soon forgot in the delightful illusions of the scene every thing but the glorious images which it presented to her excited fancy. The play was nearly finished, when the box-door was opened, and Lord William Neville presented himself. Emmeline thought there was something constrained in his manner, and that

his countenance expressed something like dissatisfaction; but as she could not suppose that she had any share in producing that appearance, she attributed the unusual gloom that pervaded him to some accidental and transient cause.

Lady De Verney, who was by no means desirous that her contrivance should be detected, engaged him in conversation about the play they were seeing; and taking advantage of an opportunity when Emmeline's eyes were intently fixed upon the stage, she whispered to him, that he must not scold; for that although Emmeline's cold was so bad that she ought to have remained at home, it had been impossible to resist her wish to come to the theatre.

Lord William made some vague reply, which convinced his wily foe that her shaft had reached the mark at which she had aimed. He had learnt from the door-keeper that the box

was taken in the name of Miss Laurimer. He found the party to consist only of ladies, with the exception of Ragotzky. He saw that his detested rival was sitting next to Emmeline—another piece of Lady De Verney's management; and he concluded most unjustly, as the reader has seen, that, while his offer had been rejected under an excuse which he believed was a subterfuge, that of Ragotzky had been accepted. His anger grew so intolerable that at length he felt he should not be able to control it, and he quitted the box suddenly without having addressed a word to Emmeline, or noticed her further than by a cold and formal bow.

Emmeline thought it was odd, but thought no more of it. The next day, however, she saw nothing of him; and on the following day when he called, it was impossible to doubt from his manner that he was playing

the offended person. Emmeline asked him what had happened to cause this change, and he made so violent and so unjustifiable an answer, taxing her with having accepted the escort of Ragotzky to the theatre after having declined his, that she felt in turn extremely indignant. The charge was in itself wholly untrue, and as she did not choose to enter into any altercation she quitted the room, intimating to him, that he would probably soon be convinced how much he had mistaken her. This calm reply only added to his irritation. He rushed out of the house, a prey to all the tormenting feelings of jealousy, and making a thousand rash resolves, the burthen of which was, that he would never think of Emmeline more—resolutions which it was much more easy to make than to keep. Lady De Verney saw the effect of her machinations with a ma-

lignant joy, and finding that Lord William discontinued the frequency of his visits, and that there was an evident coldness subsisting between the late lovers, she believed that all was ripe for her plot. She had several close conferences with the interesting Count De Ragotzky, in which arrangements were made perfectly to the satisfaction of this very worthy pair, the result of which will be hereafter seen, and which it was settled between them were to be put in practice at a masked ball, for which Lady De Verney had issued her invitations.

Matters stood thus when Lady Helena D'Arcy arrived in town. On her first meeting Emmeline she began to rally her on the cruelty of discarding such a devoted admirer as Lord William Neville.

Emmeline very easily answered this charge

by explaining to her friend how the affair which his jealousy had perverted so much, really had happened.

"Then, my dear," said Lady Helena, when she had heard her out, "I find you in the right, as I expected I should; but I have no notion of these tyrants of men giving themselves such immoderate airs, and as I am sure his quarrel with you has already tormented him not a little, I recommend you not to admit him to pardon until he has suffered as much as will expiate his fault."

"There is not much necessity for that caution," replied Emmeline, "for I assure you I don't think he has the slightest wish to be reconciled; at least he gives no indication by his behaviour of any such wish."

"Ah, my dear," said Lady Helena, "how little do you know of these 'Lords of the Creation.' The poor man is leading a life of

misery, and has been ever since he quarrelled. He has been trying to persuade himself that he is in the right, and cannot succeed; and now he would give his ears to make it up again. You must, however, keep him a little longer in suspense. He asked me to intercede for him, which you see I do, and I shall tell him that I find you so much in the right, that your inflexibility is perfectly natural and proper."

Emmeline knew that her friend would neither act for her, nor counsel her to act otherwise than was most consistent with the position in which she stood with regard to Lord William Neville. His behaviour had vexed her excessively; but she was not so deeply in love that his unreasonable and unkind conduct reduced her absolutely to despair.

"After this party which your aunt is going to give," said Lady Helena, "if he behaves well until then, perhaps he may be restored to

favour. By the way all the world is talking of your aunt's threatened *fête*. It is to be one of the most superb things, as I understand, that has ever been achieved by any of the leaders of fashion."

"So I hear on all hands," said Emmeline; "but you know how little I am acquainted with such matters."

"True, my dear," said Lady Helena, "and thank heaven for your ignorance; for therein, as the man in the play says, 'your estate is the more gracious.' But I can promise you there will be greater wonders come out at this entertainment than are at present calculated upon. You shall know all in good time; but at present I am sworn to secrecy in the most solemn manner, even from you. Nay, don't look so very much astonished, there are monstrous good reasons for these precautions, and all of them relate to you."

"Pray do explain to me," said Emmeline, "what I can have to do with the discoveries that are to be made?"

"Oh, much more than you have any notion of at present," replied Lady Helena; "but don't cross-question me about the matter; because if you do, I shall let slip something that I ought not to tell you, and so perhaps spoil the whole design. Can you inform me where Lord Redhurst is to be found, I have promised to deliver him a message from Mr. Mortimer?"

"Indeed," said Emmeline, "I cannot. His movements are extremely irregular; and very often days elapse in succession without our meeting. I am afraid he is very unhappy."

"What should make him unhappy?" asked Lady Helena.

"Nay," replied Emmeline, "that passes my skill to discover; but that he is unhappy I am sure. The heavy sighs which escape from

him involuntarily, the almost constant dejection of spirits, and abstracted manner which he evinces, leave no room to doubt that he is suffering under some such cause of grief."

"I suppose he has been losing his money at play as usual," said her ladyship. "The world talks loudly of his devoted attachment to that most ruinous pursuit, and it is said that he has already injured his future fortune considerably."

"My poor cousin," ejaculated Emmeline, "he is worthy of better things."

"He is indeed," said Lady Helena, "but how is it possible to cure a man of gaming? If it can be done, he is in a fair way of getting better, for Mr. Mortimer has undertaken to treat his malady. That Mr. Mortimer seems to take an extraordinary interest in you all. Tell me, Emmeline, how you like him."

"Oh, I love him," said Emmeline, with the

the enthusiasm and frankness which she was formerly accustomed to indulge; but, checking herself, she added—"as well as his excellent qualities deserve."

"Very well saved," said Lady Helena, "I thought by the beginning of your speech, you were going to say you loved him so well that you did not care whether Lord William came upon his knees or not. I am glad, however, to find that his virtues alone, and not his personal attractions, excite your admiration; because I should have been compelled to tell you I think he is a little too old to make a fit husband for you."

"Incorrigible jester!" said Emmeline.

"So much the better;" replied Lady Helena, "but now I want you to give me all the particulars about the masked ball we were talking of—who has been invited, and who left out—how every body is to be dressed—

who has made your dresses—who is to make mine—what they are to be made of—and a thousand other matters of deep interest, which can only be properly discussed and settled in a private and grave deliberation; therefore come and take a drive with me, and between this house and my milliner's, I think we shall be able to arrive at our conclusions."

The friends departed, and all the particulars were settled to their mutual satisfaction before they returned home. Lady Helena was twenty times on the point of discovering some of the secrets she had alluded to, and was much more indebted to Emmeline's forbearance than to her own caution for not unfolding the mystery with which she was loaded.

CHAPTER VIII.

"This night I hold an old accustom'd feast,
Whereto I have invited many a guest,
Such as I love.
——————— I have seen the day,
That I have worn a visor, and could tell
A whisp'ring tale in a fair lady's ear,
Such as would please.

SHAKSPEARE.

LADY DE VERNEY'S *bal masqué* had been talked of for weeks before the day on which it was to take place, arrived; and the expectations of the town had been raised to the highest possible pitch of excitement by the high reputation which her ladyship's taste on former similar occasions had earned for her.

Every body who had any reasonable pretensions to the honour of her acquaintance had been invited, and a multitude of others were so desirous of sharing the festivities that the task of answering the numerous applications which had been made through her friends' friends, had become really fatiguing—all was at length accomplished. Gunter had given his solemn promise to outdo all his former outdoings, and he was a man to be relied on in those days. The artificial flower makers, and the lamplighters had proceeded so far in their several tasks that her ladyship's apprehensions of the possibility of a failure were removed. The transparencies were painted, the tents erected, the floors chalked, and the dresses of the De Verney family all finished and tried on.

Many an hour of anxious consultation had been spent upon this important subject, and the decision which had been arrived at was

the result of the combined wisdom and taste of the whole family. Somebody had said once that Lady De Verney's cast of features resembled that of the ill-fated Mary Stuart, who was called upon to pay, by a bloody penance, the penalty of a thousand faults she had committed, under the colour of an accusation which, if she were guilty of it, did not deserve so hard a doom. Beauty and youth are enough to excite a powerful interest under any circumstances; exalted rank, if it does not enhance, certainly does not diminish the sympathy which the million are always ready to afford, because it costs nothing, to rich sufferers; and for this, rather than for any other reason, the memory of the Queen of Scots is commonly associated with notions of oppressed innocence, which history is far from justifying. It was enough for Lady De Verney to know that Mary Stuart was said to be beautiful, to persuade

herself that the flatterers who told her she resembled, in all respects, that unfortunate queen, were to be relied on. She knew that it was a name of interest, and this was knowledge enough for her to resolve upon adopting that character. The dress-maker, who was a pains-taking person, as soon as she received her ladyship's orders, set about executing them like a woman of business. She employed a clever artist, who, not having had the good luck to be patronised by any person with a name, was condemned to languish in obscurity, to make her drawings of such a dress as the Queen of Scots actually wore. The painter performed his office with fidelity, and Madame Marabou's fame never rose more deservedly higher than when she was cited as the *artiste* who had furnished Lady De Verney's dress for that fête, which was talked of through the town

for at least as long as any fête ever was talked of before or since.

Lady Sophia, it had been settled, was to figure as a Circassian princess. Her complexion was well adapted to the character, and her figure, which was of faultless symmetry, was perfectly suited to the habit she wore. A profusion of jewels, almost all that the stores of the family could furnish, was employed to decorate her dress, and it was admitted on all hands that the combined efforts of natural beauty, and gracefulness, with "the foreign aid of ornament," had never been more happily blended.

Emmeline had resisted, with that unconquerable determination which she had of late evinced, all Lady De Verney's persuasions that she would adopt the costume of one of the beauties who have helped to confer a disgraceful immortality on the court of the profligate and

worthless Charles the Second. Her sense of delicacy revolted from the notion of identifying herself, in however remote a degree, with the wretched women who forgot their sex's dignity so far as to be no otherwise remembered, than as the ministers to pleasures, at which reason is disgusted, and from which modesty retires in horror; nor could she help suspecting that the suggestion was another proof of the readiness of her aunt to betray her inexperience into a situation, for which she might have to blush. Notwithstanding therefore, all the remonstrance which were addressed to her, against making herself such a fright, she resolved upon wearing no other dress than the simple habit of a Carmelite nun.

Mademoiselle Blache had, of her own free choice, resolved to figure as the representative of Madame De Maintenon; and as she was too much below Lady Verney's notice to excite

either regard or opposition from her, she was permitted to retain the character she adopted. An old black satin dress of her ladyship formed the substratum of her dress: the family hoards were ransacked for some antiquated *blonde*, which had been worn by the grandmothers of the family. Mademoiselle's own ingenuity furnished the cap *à la mode de St. Cyr;* and the assistance of the hair-dresser produced a powdered grey wig, which, assisted by her own dingy and wrinkled complexion, made her one of the most accurate representations the assembly could boast.

The dresses of the gentlemen of the family were equally appropriate. Lord De Verney had been prescribed by his wife the costume of the court of Henry VIII., and wore it accordingly with the same resignation to the will of his tyrant, as was displayed by those unfortunate persons who happened to live under the

domination of that most amiable and kind of English monarchs. Lord Redhurst adopted the dress of an Alpine hunter, which neither his persuasions, nor his mother's sarcasms could induce him to change, although she essayed to shake his resolution by all kinds of unsavory comparisons, from "the Green Man" on a sign board, to a volunteer rifleman.

Lord De Verney's house was admirably adapted for the entertainment of which it was to be the scene. At so short a distance from Hyde Park, that it could not be said to be out of the town, it yet possessed such advantages as no mere town-house could command. The gardens were not extensive, but beautifully laid out by one of the first professors of the elegant science of picturesque gardening, and afforded space enough for the erection of tents and temporary dancing rooms, while the disposition

of painted lanterns and coloured lamps among the trees, gave a magic appearance to the spectacle. Lady De Verney had prayed, more devoutly than ever she had prayed before, that the weather might be propitious for her design; and, whether by accident or otherwise, it fell out according to her very wishes. The company assembled; the utmost gaiety and delight seemed to prevail, the hostess at least was charmed with the success of her exertions, and her guests only left off expressing their admiration to say illnatured things of the persons who had put themselves to so much trouble and expense, for their amusement.

Emmeline was all wonder and delight. She had never seen anything of the kind before, and the fairy scene before her realized all the dreams that her fancy had inspired of courtly revelry. The beauty and gaiety which abounded, the brilliancy of the dresses, the magic

half light in which they were displayed, and which in the fore-ground fell in full blaze upon the merry groups before her, and was softened in the distance into a thousand varying tints; the incessant sound of mirthful music, the joyous voices which rose upon her ear, filled her soul with an intoxicating pleasure. She had no wish to join in the amusements; but she thought that she could hardly ever tire of looking on at it.

Her attention was attracted by the sight of a party before her which was rapidly forming a quadrille. The dance began, and she perceived that Lady Sophia and Mademoiselle Blache were among the persons who composed it. She watched every change with the high spirit of delight which exists only at one period of life; and when it ended, a feeling of regret, childish perhaps, but still natural to one who was a

mere child in such scenes, stole over her involuntarily.

Mademoiselle Blache tired with her exercise quitted her partner, and took her seat upon the couch on which Emmeline was sitting.

"You seem fatigued, mademoiselle," said Emmeline.

"Oh, *Dieu!*" said mademoiselle, "*que je suis fatigué.*"

"And yet you did not dance like one who could ever feel tired," rejoined Emmeline, who had wondered, in the midst of her pleasure, at seeing the old Frenchwoman dance with greater spirit than any one of the party.

"*Moi, j'aime tant la danse,*" said mademoiselle. "*C'est ma folie.*"

"And the rheumatism, of which you were complaining yesterday," whispered Emmeline, "seems to have wholly left you."

"*Ma chere!*" replied mademoiselle, in a

tone of remonstrance, "*n'en parlez pas, je vous supplie.*"

"Not for the world, if any one could hear me," said Emmeline; "believe me, I am too much gratified at seeing you enjoying this delightful time to say one word that can interfere with your pleasure. It was only to congratulate you on having lost it that I mentioned your torment, the rheumatism."

"Well, at least my disguise has answered so far," said the supposed mademoiselle, looking Emmeline in the face, "for it has deceived even you."

Emmeline was puzzled for a moment by the voice and manner of the speaker as she uttered the last sentence. She looked at her again, and then saw that the person she had taken for Mademoiselle Blache was no other than Lady Helena D'Arcy.

"Is it possible, my dear Lady Helena,"

cried Emmeline, "that I have done you the injustice to mistake you for a person so entirely different from you? But how came you to be in this dress?"

"Hush, my dear! for Heaven's sake, no names!" said Lady Helena: "I have my reasons for appearing thus, which I will explain to you by-and-by. I have already had more than one confidence reposed in me under this disguise, which I mean to turn to account before the evening is over. What I want of you most particularly at this moment is to show me the way to your dressing-room, that I may get rid of these cumbrous trappings, and which, their purpose being answered, I shall be glad to change."

Emmeline immediately led her friend to her own room, and at her request inquired for her maid, who was in waiting with another habit. When the business of dressing was

finished and the maid dismissed, Lady Helena said—" No doubt, you are very much surprised at seeing me wear the dress which had been selected by that very interesting person, Mademoiselle Blache; but you will be more surprised when you learn, that it is on your account I have assumed it."

" On my account!" said Emmeline, in a tone of astonishment which fully justified her friend's surmise.

" Yes, on yours," replied Lady Helena, " and, to make you wonder still more, give me leave to inform you, that you are going to be run away with to-night by the Count Ragotzky!"

" What can you mean?" asked Emmeline.

" Literally what I say," replied Lady Helena. " There is a chariot, and four of Newman's best horses, at this moment, standing in the lane at the back of the garden. That

carriage is destined to carry you on the first stage to Scotland,—and you can surely have no objection to the plan, since it is arranged with the sanction, and at the express desire, of your aunt, Lady De Verney."

Emmeline begged her lively friend not to keep her any longer in suspense, but to explain the meaning of this singular speech.

"The explanation, then, is this," said Lady Helena: "your amiable relative, Lady De Verney, who is so full of sympathy that she cannot bear to see any human being suffer anything like pain, has taken so lively an interest in the Count Ragotzky's passion for you (and for which I must say you have made a most ungracious return) and lays it so much to heart, that she has resolved to put an end to the poor man's misery. She has, therefore, advised him to carry you off, and to trust to his own arts of persuasion, when he has you in his power, to

reconcile you to the only means that will then be left you for extricating you from the consequences of such a step. By her express advice it is that he has prepared the carriage I tell you of, and has all things in readiness to put her plan in practice; but the Count, who you know cares no more about you than he does about me, has contrived a scheme by which he means to pay off to her ladyship all the debt of gratitude he owes her for her disinterested solicitude for his happiness. He has imparted his design to Lady Sophia, whose filial regard for her mother has made her listen to it readily. She has got a dress made exactly like yours: in that dress she is to accompany the Count to his carriage, before her mother's face, who will be watching eagerly the plan she has laid for your destruction; and who will only be convinced of its failure when she ascertains that her daughter and the Count

Ragotzky are beyond pursuit. Now, is not this a notable scheme?"

"But, good Heavens!" cried Emmeline, wholly forgetting herself in her anxiety for her cousin, "this must not be. Poor Sophia must not be the dupe of such a wretched artifice, notwithstanding her mother's faults."

"Patience, my dear Emmeline," said Lady Helena, "it is not intended that she should be; but I am resolved upon teaching her ladyship a lesson which she will not easily forget, that it is possible to hurt herself in trying to injure others."

"I care not for her," said Emmeline, "but only reflect upon the consequences to Sophia."

"Oh, I have reflected upon all that," said Lady Helena, "and have taken much more pains about her than she deserves. Be satisfied that no harm can befall her."

"But how did you discover this plan of Lady De Verney's?" asked Emmeline.

"Why, to tell the truth, all the merit of the discovery is not mine; part of it belongs to your friend Mr. Mortimer, for whom I have taken a huge liking. My share of it is this. I discovered, by accident, at Madame Marabou's, that Lady Sophia had ordered a dress exactly like yours. Madame Marabou enjoined me the strictest secrecy, because she said that by Lady De Verney's express commands not a living soul was to know one word about it. This convinced me that some mischief was brewing. I consulted Mr. Mortimer, who by the bye, seems to take such an extraordinary interest in you as would justify Lord William Neville's jealousy much more than the pretended pursuit of that Monsieur Ragotzky, and he, it appears, is by some means or other in the confidence of his countship. Mr. Mortimer

told me that the Count had informed him he was going to make his fortune by running away with a lady of wealth, family, and expectation, although he would not disclose her name. I then determined upon finding out the secret, and for that purpose, I got a dress made, the fac simile of Mademoiselle Blache's—but not by Madame Marabou, lest my intention might be discovered. In that dress, which enabled me to impose even upon you, I have had conversations with Lady De Verney and with her daughter, which have informed me of all the particulars of their scheme, and enabled me to defeat it. But come," she added, "we have no time to lose. You must not appear any more in your nun's garb. Wilson has brought another dress, which you must put on, and then we must go down stairs to be present at the *denouement* of the pleasant comedy which is in preparation."

As she spoke, she assisted Emmeline in changing her disguise for that which she had provided, and the friends descended again to the garden, Lady Helena in the costume of a Cauchoise, and Emmeline in that of an Italian Pilgrim. Neither of them wore masks, but Emmeline's dress, which reached up to her neck, and a broad hat, the brim of which overshadowed her face, effectually prevented her from being recognised, excepting by her voice. The hour of supper had nearly arrived. The masqueraders had drawn with admirable skill towards the room in which the banquet was to be held, and the gardens were nearly deserted. Emmeline observed two figures at a short distance, and coming nearer, perceived that one of them was Lady Sophia, dressed in a nun's habit, exactly similar to that she had just quitted, and that the other was the Count

Ragotzky in the garb of a Polish noble. They were in earnest conversation.

"Observe them closely," said Lady Helena, whose quick eye had caught them at least as soon as her friend's, "and we shall soon see something come of this communication."

At this moment Lord William Neville, in the full uniform of the dragoon regiment in which he had formerly held a commission, passed before them with a gloomy abstracted air.

Lady Helena stopped him, keeping at the same time so much before Emmeline, who had taken a seat in the most obscure corner of the saloon, that she was wholly out of sight of her angry lover.

"I declare," said her lively ladyship, "I never saw a more perfect disguise. It would be wholly impossible for any body who knew

you less intimately than I, to discover Lord William Neville."

"You are pleased to jest," replied Lord William, in an indifferent tone. "I neither expect nor wish to be disguised. It is for that reason I have adopted a dress in which no one who knows me can fail to recognise me."

"Then without intending it," said Lady Helena; "you have succeeded infinitely better than the hundreds of people who surround us, and who are trying in vain to conceal their true characters."

"And pray, may I ask, how I have happened to effect this object?" asked his lordship.

"Why, by appearing as little like yourself as possible. The Lord William Neville, whom I, and all the world, knew, was full of vivacity and good spirits, and good temper. The masquerader before me (I don't mean to flatter

is as dull, as melancholy, and as sullen as ever I should wish not to see any friend of mine."

"These scenes have no attraction for me," said his lordship.

"And since when is it that they have lost their attractions?" asked Lady Helena.

"No matter when; the truth is, I am very much out of sorts; angry with all the world, and most of all, angry with myself."

"The first ground of your displeasure is, I know, unfounded; because, I am sure the world has given you no reason to be angry with it. What cause you may have for quarrelling with yourself it does not become me to say."

"'He jests at scars, who never felt a wound.' You who are perfectly at ease can find nothing in my miseries, but a subject for that sarcasm, in which you delight."

"Simply because your miseries are merely imaginary. You have quarrelled with Emmeline in a fit of absurd jealousy; you would give your ears to make it up again; and yet you have not the grace nor the candour to beg pardon as you ought to do."

"Admitting I was wrong in the first instance, is not the cold indifference she has ever since evinced, unpardonable? Has she not by her silence convinced me that it is a matter of no interest to her whether I am distressed at her behaviour or not?"

"I will wager my head against your sword-knot—which, according to my estimation, is no small odds, that she has never done any thing to justify the complaint you make against her. You call that indifference which is in truth only a proper sense of indignation at the manner in which you have thought fit to treat her."

"But her behaviour during the whole of the evening—has she not been dancing with that detestable Count repeatedly; and is she not even now conversing with him in a manner which shews too plainly the satisfaction she derives from his society?"

"I am certain she has not danced with him; nor do I believe that she has exchanged one word with him during the whole of the night."

"May I not believe my own eyes and ears?"

"My own have deceived me so often that I never mean to trust them again."

"Pshaw! Look at them at this moment," and Lord William, as he spoke, pointed to the Count and Lady Sophia, who by reason of her dress he had mistaken for Emmeline. "There, they are quitting the room—she takes his arm—oh, I am a fool past all endurance, to think for a moment of one so worthless."

"Where can they be going?" said Lady Helena, in a tone of excited curiosity.

"What matters it?" replied his lordship; "they may go whither they will for me."

"Now do indulge me," said Lady Helena, "and take me with you to observe their movements." As she spoke, she put her arm through his, and drawing him with her, followed at a distance the steps of Lady Sophia and Ragotzky, who proceeded to a more distant part of the gardens.

The door opening on the lane, of which Lady Helena had spoken, was connected by a covered passage, with a kind of small music room, and to this room it was that the fugitives directed their steps. The attractions of the supper had drawn away all the guests, and at this moment it was left entirely empty. Lady Helena led her unresisting companion to a spot which commanded a full view of this room, the win-

dows of which were thrown open, and took up her station so as to see all that passed, while she and Lord William Neville were concealed by the shrubs which grew around.

Ragotzky was evidently endeavouring to overcome the reluctance which his companion manifested. What he said could not be heard, owing to the low tone in which he spoke; but the shrinking gestures of Lady Sophia made it obvious that she was either afraid or unwilling to take the step to which he was urging her. At length she reclined her head on his shoulder, and Lady Helena perceived by the convulsive heaving of her neck, that she was weeping violently. Ragotzky appeared embarrassed; and the anxious regards which he cast towards the door, seemed to indicate that he was waiting for some one whom he expected to arrive.

"Let us go away," said Lord William, "I can endure this torment no longer."

"Now what would you say for yourself and your jealousy," asked Lady Helena, "if it should turn out after all that this same nun is no more Emmeline Laurimer than it is me?"

"Impossible!" said he. "Would to heaven it were otherwise!"

"And is there no means of convincing you?"

At this moment, and before he could reply, Mademoiselle Blache appeared in the room, carrying a package of some sort in her hand. After a short interchange of communication between her and Ragotzky, she hurried through the passage.

"Can nothing convince you of your mistake?" repeated Lady Helena.

"No, nothing; but yet, lost as she is to me and to herself, I will make one effort to save her. I will tell her of the consequences of the

step she is about to take—I will tell her for whom it is that she is about to sacrifice her happiness and reputation."

As he spoke, and before Lady Helena could stop him, he rushed into the room, and was approaching Lady Sophia, when Ragotzky interposed.

"With your permission, sir," said Lord William Neville, attempting to pass him.

"My Lord, you must not approach that lady," said Ragotzky.

"What shall prevent me?"

"I must prevent you, unless you do me the favour of desisting," replied the other, with firmness, which the surprise of this event could not shake. "You have nothing to do with that lady, and she is at present under my protection."

"Emmeline!" cried Lord William, passion-

ately, and without heeding the last remark, "hear me but for a moment, and for the last time."

The supposed Emmeline had thrown herself into a chair, and was weeping violently, her face completely buried in her hands.

"You perceive," said Ragotzky, "that you distress the lady, and surely I need not remind you that, as a gentleman, you ought not to persist in this extraordinary conduct. I beseech you to withdraw."

As he spoke he put his hand gently on Lord William's arm. That touch, like a spark to gunpowder, seemed to fire the passion which he had repressed with difficulty. No longer master of himself, he struck the Count so violent a blow as made him stagger, and was rushing towards the weeping girl, when Ragotzky, furious at the insult he had received, and at seeing Lord William on the point of

making the discovery he wished most to conceal from him, fastened upon him. The struggle was violent; but not long. Lord William was possessed of great natural strength, and the athletic exercises for which he had acquired a taste at Eton that had never entirely quitted him, had given him such prompt command of his powers that there were few men who in such a contest could hope to master him. Ragotzky's efforts were wholly in vain. Lord William disengaged himself from his grasp, and struck him to the ground with such violence that the Count lay for a few moments stunned.

At this moment Lady De Verney followed by Emmeline, entered the room, attracted by the noise which had accompanied the fierce altercation between Ragotzky and Lord William. The spectacle which presented itself was an extraordinary one. Lord William was

by the side of Lady Sophia, entreating her to listen to him, in the belief that she was Emmeline, and in which her resolute concealment of her features confirmed him. Ragotzky had risen with difficulty from the floor, his face and linen stained with the blood which still flowed plentifully in consequence of his antagonist's blow.

Lady De Verney approached, and in her most authoritative manner, demanded the meaning of the tumult.

Ragotzky breathless with rage and pain was silent. Her ladyship repeated her question, directing it particularly to Lord William Neville.

"I know not, madam," replied his lordship; "I only know that I am desirous of saving one who deserves a better fate from the artifices of a villain."

"Remember, my Lord, to whom you speak,

and in what place," said her ladyship, with an air of offended dignity.

"I care not," said his lordship, "if all the world hears that which all the world ought to know, that this cherished guest of your ladyship (pointing to Ragotzky) is a disgrace to the society in which he is permitted to intrude."

"For this, as well as all I owe you besides, your lordship shall answer me," said Ragotzky, and he rushed out of the room.

"If your object is to insult me," said Lady De Verney, "you have chosen a most extraordinary manner of accomplishing it; and having succeeded, you will, now, perhaps, do me the favour to withdraw."

"Most willingly," replied Lord William, "but first your ladyship is entitled to some explanation from me, and I give it in two words. I saw the person who has just quitted the

room urging your niece to elope with him. Shocked at the consequences which must have followed such a step, I interposed to save her. For the violence which ensued, I can really hardly account, but it was occasioned by the Count's attempt to prevent me from speaking to Miss Laurimer."

"And what reason can you have to suppose that Miss Laurimer was going to elope?" asked her ladyship, who felt that the matter might become critical, and was, therefore, desirous of seeing how far she might go safely.

Lady Helena, who had followed Lord William into the room, and been a witness of the scene that had taken place, interposed, and said, "All I know of it is, that there is a post-chaise and four horses waiting at the garden door, and that, it must be confessed, looks very like an elopement."

"Really if Miss Laurimer is disposed to run

away," said her ladyship scornfully, I don't know how I am called upon to prevent it. Miss Laurimer is quite old enough to take care of herself; and, at all events, I see no reason why my house should be disgraced by such outrageous violence, as has lately been displayed. Do pray, Miss Laurimer," said her ladyship, approaching her supposed niece, with a feeling of malignant triumph, "condescend to tell us what all this means."

No reply was made to her ladyship's speech.

"Nay then," said Lady De Verney, "I must insist;" and, with much more violence than was either ladylike or becoming, she seized the hand in which her daughter held the handkerchief that covered her face; and pulling it away, disclosed the features of Lady Sophia to the persons present.

It would be difficult to describe the feelings of Lady De Verney at that moment. The

sight of the rough usage her favourite Count had undergone, had first excited her utmost rage against Lord William Neville. Her next feeling was a desire to disgrace and mortify Emmeline, and, by exposing her, to wound the feelings of her lover. She had eagerly seized on the opportunity which, as she thought, presented itself for effecting this purpose—the blow had recoiled upon herself, and she saw it was her own pain and shame she had been achieving instead of another's. Her cunning did not desert her, however, in the midst of her embarrassment, and endeavouring to appear calm while the angry emotions of her soul were still visible in her convulsed features, she said, "Oh, then, I suppose, this is some masquerading nonsense among the young people, and that Lady Sophia has been induced to wear Miss Laurimer's dress. You

see, my dear," she continued, addressing her daughter, "how nearly your good nature has involved you in a serious dilemma. But, come, you had better retire, and let us have no more said about a matter which, I confess, I do not understand, but which ought not, therefore, to trouble the harmony of this evening."

Emmeline burnt with indignation at the conduct of Lady De Verney. She felt that she could not permit such an imputation to rest on her as her ladyship had endeavoured to cast, and advancing, she said calmly, "I beg your ladyship to understand that I have no part in this affair, and that Lady Sophia does not wear my dress, nor did I know that she was possessed of one exactly resembling it."

"We will have no explanations," said her ladyship with an affected sneer, "I can ima-

gine the truth of the business, and if I am satisfied, I don't know that any other person will require to investigate it further."

Mademoiselle, who had glided into the room, from the passage, at the beginning of the conversation, but who had remained apart, and had hitherto kept silence, now took courage to interpose, and said insolently, "Oh, dear, yes, there can be no doubt about it. No one will venture to suppose, if any elopement was intended, that Lady Sophia could have had any share in it."

Lady De Verney looked at her as if she would have annihilated her for her officious interference. At this moment a raw red-headed country lad, who had been transplanted, by Lord De Verney, from the plough, in order that he might, in the fulness of time, and under the instructions of his lordship's more accomplished servants, become a foot-

man; and who had, on this busy occasion, been permitted to take full rank in the *corps domestique* of the establishment, entered with a small portmanteau. He looked vacantly about, as if seeking for some one.

Lady De Verney ordered him to withdraw.

"Yees, my ladyship," said the lad, "but, if you please, what be I to do with this here portmantle?"

"Begone, sir," cried her ladyship in a rage.

"Well," said the lad, "I will—but"—and he was slowly retiring, when his eye caught the figure of Mademoiselle Blache, who appeared desirous of getting somewhat more into the shade. "Oh, there you are, ma'am," he cried, "it was you who gave me the portmantle, and told me when a lady and gentleman came out of the gate and got into the carriage that was waiting, I was to put it in

after them. Well, I ha' waited till just now, and no lady and gentleman came, and the carriage has driven away."

This unlucky discovery made all that was before obscure perfectly clear. The portmanteau was Lady Sophia's, as every person in the family knew, and as a large brass plate upon it told most intelligibly to all the world; and it had been given to this lad by her ladyship's own governess. All notion of Emmeline's having any thing to do with the intended elopement was at once dissipated.

Lady De Verney could endure the conflict of feeling which this exposure occasioned no longer; she rushed out of the room, and was followed by Lady Sophia and mademoiselle in silent confusion.

Lord William Neville approached Emmeline with a look of the utmost distress. "Is it possible," he said timidly, "that I can hope to

be forgiven for conduct, the injustice and absurdity of which I see now too clearly?"

"I must say I don't think you deserve much," said Lady Helena, "but perhaps Emmeline may be inclined, in her foolish good natured way, to make some allowance for you; and, after six or seven years of atonement, permit you to hope that you may be restored to her good graces."

"There is but one circumstance I can plead in excuse for my otherwise unpardonable conduct," said Lord William, "it is that excess of passion for Miss Laurimer alone has been the cause of the jealousy I so sincerely deplore."

"The worst excuse in the world," said Lady Helena, "for that very love which you say is so ardent, ought not to have permitted you to entertain the slightest doubt of your mistress's perfection. However it is no affair of mine if

Emmeline likes to take you into favour again, it will be a greater proof of her amiability than of your merit."

Emmeline felt that her lover's offence, considering the provocation which Lady De Verney's behaviour had afforded him, was a venial one; and that, however unfounded his suspicions had been, the artifices of her designing relations had been well calculated to excite them. It was not necessary for her to utter her forgiveness, Lord William saw it in her manner, and seizing the hand she extended towards him he kissed it fervently, and expressed his thanks more warmly than coherently.

Emmeline then turned to Lady Helena, and began to remonstrate with her for having permitted matters to go so far as they had done, between Lady Sophia and Ragotzky. "In another minute," said she, "they would have

been off; and poor Sophia would have been made miserable for ever."

"You evince much greater solicitude for her than she deserves," replied Lady Helena, "but to quiet your scruples on that head, I may tell you now that I had effectually prevented the event you allude to. With the assistance of Mr. Mortimer, who is much deeper in my confidence than you have any notion of at present, I had arranged so that the elopement would only have been from the back door to the front entrance. The postillions knew very well where they were going, and the Count's scheme would have been completely baffled without the scene that has taken place, although I availed myself of it to make this gentleman," pointing to Lord William, "as much ashamed of his jealousy as you now see him."

The fracas which has been described, having

happened just at the moment when the guests were at supper, had passed off without exciting any attention, and was known only to the persons who had been present at it. Lady De Verney had retired to her room, but her absence was not observed by any of the persons who were busied in enjoying the entertainment. Lady Helena expressed her intention of departing, and foreseeing that after what had occurred, Lady De Verney's house would be more uncomfortable than ever to Emmeline, prevailed upon her to take up her abode with her for the present. Having arranged that she would call for her at an early hour on the following day, the friends separated, and Emmeline, agitated by the events of the evening, withdrew to her chamber, where sleep soon relieved her from the pressure of the embarrassing thoughts that had tormented her.

CHAPTER IX.

> "There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them as we will."
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

On the following morning, at an early hour, Emmeline descended to the library, to while away the time until Lady Helena should arrive and release her from the irksomeness of her present position. She knew full well that the disappointment and mortification which Lady De Verney had undergone must have so exasperated her mind, that her natural violence would assume a shape less controllable, if possible, than ever. Emmeline felt that she had

incurred no blame for anything that had happened; but, on the contrary, that all Lady De Verney suffered was the consequence, and the just consequence, of her own inexcusable conduct. This, however, she knew would not be enough to protect her against the overflowings of her ladyship's wrath; and although she had long learnt to disregard that violence, she would very willingly have avoided its explosion, and she therefore hoped heartily that Lady Helena might come before her anticipated interview with her aunt, notwithstanding she had resolutely determined that interview should be the last.

The library was a spacious apartment, well-furnished with books, the collection of many of her uncle's predecessors, and to which even he had added, rather from habit and fashion than from any love of reading; for, with the

exception of the daily newspapers,—now and then a political pamphlet on some subject which, from its general interest, he could not avoid knowing something about,—and the Racing Calendar,—Lord De Verney was as guiltless of wasting any portion of his valuable time in the worthless pursuits of literature as any nobleman in his majesty's dominions. At the end of the library was a small circular chamber, separated from the larger room by a rich curtain, and communicating with the garden by means of a conservatory. This chamber contained some exquisite cabinet pictures, and other productions of art, and a small collection of the works of the living authors of Europe. It was Emmeline's favourite resort. In reading, drawing, and meditating on the waywardness of her destiny, and on the prospect of her future life, she had spent many hours in this

room, and from this habit she had grown to look upon it almost in the light of a friend in a house where other friends she had almost none.

She had been sitting here for some time, and as yet the house was in perfect stillness. The servants, tired with the labours of the preceding night, had not risen, and it was earlier than the ordinary time at which other members of the family made their appearance. The library door opened suddenly, and with some violence; a person entered with a hurried and heavy step; the door was closed again, and Emmeline heard the person who had entered throw himself—for she was sure, from the sound of the foot-fall, that it was a man—into a chair. The curtain was nearly drawn, and wholly concealed her person; but as she raised her head, she saw in a mirror, which covered the pier opposite her, that it was Lord Redhurst, whose entrance had attracted

her attention. Emmeline, without quitting her seat, was enabled to see him distinctly in the glass. He was pale, and his features bore an expression of pain and grief which chilled her to the heart. After sitting for some moments in a gloomy, abstracted mood, he buried his face in his hands, and she then perceived, by the convulsive movement of his chest, and by the suppressed groans which broke from him, that he was overwhelmed by some mental agony which he was endeavouring to repress. Her first impulse was to rise and quit the room, but she feared to add to her cousin's pain, by letting him know that she had witnessed emotions which he evidently believed he was suffering in secret. She would have quitted the chamber by the conservatory, but that the doors, which had been locked on the preceding night, were not yet opened; and the noise she must have made in attempting to

unclose them, would have discovered her presence. She therefore determined to remain in her present position, in the hope that Lord Redhurst would soon quit the library. Her book lay before her; she endeavoured to continue its perusal, from which her cousin's entrance had diverted her, but she found it impossible.

After some time, Lord Redhurst rose from his seat, and approached the door. Emmeline believed he was departing; but to her surprise, as well as disappointment, she heard him turn the key in the lock, and saw him return to the chair he had before occupied. He drew it to the table, and began to write. Emmeline gazed at him with painful interest. She saw the tears course each other rapidly down his cheeks, and he paused frequently to give vent to the sorrow that seemed wholly to unman him.

Emmeline had long viewed him with feelings

of far greater interest than were inspired by any of the other persons of his family. He had treated her with kindness which formed a striking contrast to the cold haughtiness of his mother, the careless indifference of his father, and the vain selfishness of his sister. She knew that he possessed qualities worthy of esteem, and she had always deplored that the apathy and proud distrust which marked his general demeanour, had prevented her from indulging the sisterly affection which she would otherwise have felt towards him. She had heard that he was a gamester, and the thought of horror, which this intimation had conveyed to her mind, was mixed with grief, that one who was worthy of nobler pursuits should be the victim of so degrading a vice.

Lord Redhurst finished two letters, which he folded up and laid on the table before him. He then paced the room with a rapid step for

a few moments, and Emmeline heard him utter occasionally an exclamation of despair. At length he stopped. "Fool and madman that I have been!" he exclaimed, in a tone which spoke the remorse he seemed to feel; "to have sold for pleasures so worthless all the happiness that fortune placed within my reach, all that hope could picture. But it is done," he added, after a pause; "the past it is now in vain to regret—and the future—but I must not think. Little time is left, and in that little I must be doing."

Emmeline heard him again go to the door and try the lock, as if to ascertain that it was fastened. He then returned to his seat, and slowly took off his coat and cravat. When he had finished, he produced from his pocket two pistols, and, having examined the locks, he laid one of them on the table, and retained the other in his hand. A thought of horror crossed

Emmeline's brain, and it was with difficulty that she refrained from screaming aloud. At once the dreadful conviction of Lord Redhurst's purpose flashed upon her mind. His tears, his groans of agony were now all explained. She could not doubt that he had determined on committing suicide, and that this was the moment and the place in which his fatal intent was to be accomplished. The expression of his face was dreadful; the glare of his eye full of horror. He still held the pistol in his hand; when a sudden impulse seeming to cross his mind, he laid it for a moment on the table, and knelt with his face bowed over the chair on which he had been sitting. Emmeline felt that it was no time for giving way to the terrors which almost mastered her strength; with a desperate energy, and taking advantage of the momentary pause in which Lord Redhurst was addressing himself to

prayer, she dashed at the table, seized both the pistols, and, almost before he could regain his feet, had thrown them out of an open window in the chamber in which she had been sitting.

To describe the astonishment and confusion of Lord Redhurst would be impossible. It was evident to him that his intention had been perceived; no less evident that it had been frustrated. He could not imagine by what means Emmeline had been able to enter the room; and for a few moments the power of utterance was denied him. When he could speak, he faltered out, "How came you here?"

Emmeline's terrors had passed away.—Prompt as her sensibilities were, and timid as was her natural disposition, she possessed an abundance of cool moral courage, which, when an occasion happened sufficiently powerful to elicit it, enabled her to encounter real danger

without shrinking. She knew the difficulty of the situation in which chance had thrown her; she knew that her cousin's life, and all his hopes of happiness, temporal and eternal, were at stake—that perhaps they depended upon the present moment; and summoning all her fortitude, she said, with a composed voice, and a calm, but somewhat severe brow, in reply to his enquiry—"I came here by the direct interposition of heaven."

Lord Redhurst's eyes fell, and, awed by her manner, he remained silent.

Emmeline continued—"By the interposition of that God whose dictates you were about to violate, at the very moment that you bent before Him in supplication for the mercy which you were recklessly casting from you." She saw that her speech and manner had produced upon him the effect she desired. The stubborrness which had lately possessed him,

melted; he sunk, overpowered by grief, in his chair, and covering his face with his hands, sobbed aloud.

In a milder tone she pursued—"What madness can have inspired you with a resolution at once so unpardonably guilty and so needless? What misfortune can have happened to you, which it is beyond the reach of friends such as surround you to repair, or which you cannot hope to surmount?"

"Oh, do not speak to me; do not look at me," groaned he, "I am a wretch so utterly ruined in fortune and in fame, that I can find repose nowhere but in death."

"You speak the language of frantic, blind despair, and forget that you call yourself a christian," replied Emmeline. "If it be your lot to suffer; if your sufferings are the more intense because they are the consequences of your own imprudence, it is your duty to en-

dure them as becomes a man. To flee from them would be cowardice, under any circumstances; to do the nameless deed which you lately contemplated, is to incur guilt more ruinous even to your name than all that the world's obloquy could load you with—and to doom yourself to eternal pains, of which death would be but the beginning."

"Alas, you know not the extent of my wretchedness," said he—"or you would not talk to me of hope."

"It is true," replied Emmeline, "but I know that, be it what it may, it cannot form a sufficient reason—nay if it were a thousand times doubled, that it could not justify your desperate intentions. You know that no motive of idle curiosity can prompt my enquiry when I beseech you to tell me what is the cause of your distress."

"Simply that I am ruined:—ruined beyond

the aid of friends, beyond the reach of fortune. I have indulged in the destructive vice of gaming, until I have lost all that I possess in the world. I have lost all that the future may bring me, and more than I can ever pay, if I were to live to a remote old age. The fortune of my family is gone before it is mine, and I have incurred debts I can never discharge, and under the disgrace of which I cannot live."

"But deep and heavy as these evils are, they are not beyond cure, with time and the assistance of friends."

"My time is spent, and the sympathy of my friends I have exhausted."

"Lord William Neville's help I am sure you may reckon upon," said Emmeline; "and Mr. Mortimer——"

"Have both been tried; both have proved themselves my fast friends; both have urged their most strenuous persuasions to wean me

from the degrading, and now detestable pursuits of which I have been the willing victim; and the bitterest of my reflections is, that in the ruin of my own fortunes, theirs are in some degree involved."

"You draw a painful picture," said Emmeline, "but still the evil is not incurable. If wealth were the greatest good in the world, the utter loss of it might account for the despair that has overwhelmed you; but you cannot say you think it is."

"It is indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of all that is called good," he replied in a mournful accent.

"It would be, perhaps," rejoined Emmeline, "if the opinions of the vain crowd, who compose what is called 'the world,' were to decide the matter; but can it compensate for the loss of health, or for the quiet of the mind, which can exist only when the heart is pure? With these, the possession of riches is an

advantage; without them it is always insipid, sometimes a curse."

"You talk to me in vain," said he, somewhat impatiently, "because you talk mere theory; while my conduct must be directed by what I know will be the inevitable consequence of my present condition. Ruin, beggary, disgrace—these I cannot encounter, my heart revolts and sickens at the thought of what I should have to endure. Philosophy cannot help me."

"At least you have not tried it," said Emmeline.

"It is too late now," he replied, "but let us put an end to this conversation. Chance has placed my secrets in your possession, and has postponed an intention which must, however, be fulfilled."

Emmeline shuddered, but did not interrupt him.

"All that I have to ask of you," he conti-

nued, "is, that you will observe silence respecting the occurrence of this morning. To mention it, you must be aware, can do no good, and to me it will be a pang in addition to those which now torment me. And one thing besides," he added in a voice of strong emotion—"think of me sometimes—and let pity for the sufferings I have endured mingle with the censure which your judgment must pass upon me, and do not wholly shut me out from the hope that you will pardon, while you condemn me."

"It is not of me that pardon is to be asked," said Emmeline, solemnly, "it is from that power which, if you have not forgotten wholly, you have too much neglected. Ask your own heart if you can hope to deserve it. Turn one moment from the counsels which your intemperate despair suggests, and ask that monitor which speaks always faithfully, though too

often unheeded, whether the crime you have contemplated, and which, as the horrid purport of your speech implies, you still contemplate—can be pardoned. I speak not of what is past: rash and culpable as the conduct has been which causes your remorse, it is trifling in itself, and in its consequences, to that step from which Heaven's own agency, and not accident, has just diverted you. You would plunge your family into hopeless wretchedness. You will heap sorrow incurable upon the heads of all you hold most dear—you would stain your own name—that name as yet young, and which might—nay may—be made illustrious beyond all the dignity that the rank you are born to can confer—you would rush madly into the presence of the God you have offended, loaded with a crime than which no heavier can be committed by mortal; and you will inflict this agony upon others—you will incur this frightful peril in

your own person for no better reason than the selfish one that you have committed imprudences which in their result must abridge some of the enjoyments which you have persuaded yourself are necessary to your existence. This is the true picture of your present state—judge for yourself whether you can hope for pardon."

Lord Redhurst groaned aloud, but did not reply. At this moment a knocking was heard at the door. He started and looked towards it with alarm. The knocking was repeated, a voice was heard pronouncing the name of Lord Redhurst, which Emmeline joyfully recognised to be that of Mr. Mortimer. The unfortunate young man appeared so much overcome, that he was unable to move, and Emmeline approaching the door, unlocked it, and having admitted Mr. Mortimer, turned the key again, to prevent interruption by any of the family.

The scene which presented itself to his view on entering the room was sufficient to excite his surprise. Lord Redhurst was sitting in a chair without his coat, overwhelmed with grief and remorse. Emmeline, who, although she endeavoured to repress her emotion, could not succeed in commanding the expression of her features, was pale as marble, and her limbs trembled with agitation. Mr. Mortimer too appeared to be labouring under some strong excitement. He approached Lord Redhurst, and said—"My dear friend, what is the meaning of all this?—what has befallen you?—above all, what could induce you to write me so alarming a letter as that I have just received?"

"Have you received it?" asked Lord Redhurst; "then all is known, and I am despised as well as ruined."

"You are neither the one nor the other; nor shall shame or disgrace ever be coupled

with your name, if you will only be just to yourself," replied Mr. Mortimer: "but tell me, Miss Laurimer, if you can, what is the reason that I find your cousin thus unmanned?"

"Ay, tell it," said Lord Redhurst; "tell the whole tale of my misery; there is no occasion for secrecy now. The letter you have received, and which it was my intention should not have reached you until it would have been too late for your interference, has explained my intentions. Miss Laurimer will tell you how they have been frustrated."

"The hand of Heaven," said Emmeline, "has interposed to save him from everlasting destruction;" and in reply to Mr. Mortimer's inquiries, she told him the chance that had occasioned her being in the room, and the circumstances which had led to her baffling her cousin's desperate design against his own life.

"It is indeed the hand of Heaven," said Mr. Mortimer, with emotion, "and you are worthy to be the minister of its workings." He then turned to Lord Redhurst—"And is it possible," he said, "that the pernicious habit against which I have so often cautioned you, can have led to a resolution so fatal? Can it be that such a person, as I know you to be, will permit his character for honour and manliness to be forfeited, his virtue degraded, his pride extinguished, for no other consideration than his indulgence in the melancholy vice of gaming?"

"Speak not of it," said Lord Redhurst; "you torture me without the chance of doing me any good. It is too late now to make resolutions which can never be put in practice; but I charge you to believe me, when I swear, with the utmost sincerity, that if the world, with

which I have done, were about to begin with me again, no earthly temptation should induce me to enter, in however slight a degree, into pursuits, the horrid consequences of which I have been only enabled to see at the moment I am called upon to bear their penalty."

"And this you say in solemn truth," said Mr. Mortimer.

"As truly as the speech of a dying man should be said," replied Lord Redhurst; "and as I hope for pardon."

"And have you such confidence in your own resolves," asked Mr. Mortimer, "that you believe you could keep, in health and prosperity, that which you make in dejection of soul, and in the hour of misfortune?"

"I have," replied Lord Redhurst; "and from this moment, short as my stay may be—must be—upon earth, I will never touch card or dice again."

"And to this you pledge your honour?" asked Mr. Mortimer.

"What need of pledges from me?" said Lord Redhurst, despairingly. "I am ruined, as you know, past all redemption. I am poor as the poorest beggar that crawls. Fortune, wild as her flights sometimes are, cannot reach me—present means and future hope, all—all have been extinguished by my mad infatuation. It would be childish and contemptible for me to *talk* of making such a resolution; but it is *made* never to be broken, come what may."

"Then you shall be as you ought to be," said Mr. Mortimer. "It is in my power to remove all that causes your present despair, and I will do it."

"Alas! you know not the extent of my involvements," said Lord Redhurst; "and I already owe you too much to accept of further aid from your hands."

"You mistake," replied the other, "I know all. I know that you have raised at a ruinous rate of interest, money to supply your passion for play. I know that you have sold at a price which none but the worst and most dishonest of men would give, all that you enjoy at present, and all your future interest in the estates of your family. I know you have, in short, divested yourself of every pecuniary means of existence; and I know too that you have lost, to the last shilling, all that you have raised by such means at the gaming-table. Knowing all this, and knowing it much more intimately than you imagine, I tell you, in spite of it, that all shall yet be well with you if you keep the pledge you have just given, and which you have made in terms so solemn, that I do not doubt your adherence to it."

Lord Redhurst shook his head and sighed. He was touched by the earnest kindness of his

friend, and, grasping his hand, expressed by that mute gesture, his sense of the warm interest which Mr. Mortimer evinced for him; but he was sunk too deep in misery, and knew the desperate position in which he had placed himself, too well, to give credence to the flattering hopes which his speech held out.

"You distrust me," said Mr. Mortimer, "listen for a moment and your doubts shall be removed. When I arrived in England some months ago, I found you a victim of the infatuation you have just renounced for ever—the bond slave of a vice, which although it does not assume so odious a shape as some of those which disgrace human nature, is in its effects more withering to the heart of the unhappy persons on whom it fastens—more destructive to their happiness—more wide-spreading in the ruin which it visits upon others, than all the crimes besides, which the spirit of evil can

engender. You thought our acquaintance began by accident. There you were mistaken. I sought you. Your pride could not repulse me, for I had motives for attempting to rescue you, so strong that nothing could extinguish them. At length you did justice to the earnest affection with which I forced myself upon your notice. I gained your friendship, and as much of your confidence as you could bring yourself to bestow upon me. I tried by persuasion, argument, and remonstrance, to wean you from the wretched pursuit in which you were engaged. You know how vain were all my efforts. I then changed my ground. You were attempting to raise money by means of the miserable people who live by the vices of such men as you. I prevented this without seeming to interfere. It was my money that was lent you upon annuities, and post obit bonds. With the assistance of Mr. Loudun,

the usurers, to whom you surrendered yourself as their prey, were made my agents. It was necessary to do more; and that I did. I leagued myself with the wretches who encouraged your love of gaming. I knew they cheated you; it was not difficult to make them my tools, and by means of bribes which their sordid tempers could not withstand, the whole machinery of their craft became familiar to me. You have been ruined only in imagination—and there,"—drawing a packet of papers from his pocket as he spoke—"there are the securities by which you thought you deprived yourself of your fortune, and which in any other hands than mine, would have produced the effects which have driven you so nearly to despair."

Lord Redhurst and Emmeline looked at him with the utmost astonishment. Neither of them could speak. Lord Redhurst's features

expressed a confused mixture of wonder and joy; and as he turned over the papers which Mr. Mortimer had presented to him, his feelings became too powerful for endurance. He sunk into a chair, and sobbed aloud. Emmeline seized the hand of the benevolent being who had thus rescued her cousin from ruin; and her warm tears fell upon it as she raised it involuntarily to her lips.

Mr. Mortimer continued, "this day was the one which I had fixed for disclosing to you all that I had done; but, at the very moment I thought my plans were to be crowned with success, and I was to reap the reward I had promised myself for exertions which have been laborious, and even sometimes disgusting, you were about to crush them with the most dreadful disappointment. The interposition of Providence has saved us from a consummation so full of horror; and has taught, by a striking

and awful lesson, that the designs of man are blind and uncertain as those of Heaven are wise and righteous. You will wonder naturally what has induced me to take these pains for one whom I saw for the first time a few months ago, and with whom, as you imagine, your connexion is but a slight one. One word will explain this, but the explanation does not concern you alone. It is to you, my child," he said, turning to Emmeline, "that it is due. I am that father whom you have desired to see so long, and whose arms embrace his daughter for the first time."

"As he spoke, Emmeline rushed into his embrace, and for a few moments, the father and his child gave vent to their emotions in silent ecstasy.

Mr. Mortimer, or as he should more properly be called, Mr. Frederick Laurimer, recovering himself, said to Lord Redhurst. "Yes,

I am your father's brother. I came to England to seek my long-lost child. I found my brother's son, the representative of a long line of honourable ancestors, about to tarnish all the past glory of his family, by follies, which I saw were more the fault of his education, than of his heart. I felt that the duty of rescuing him from such peril, was paramount to the indulgence of my own feelings. I saw my child, knew that she was safe, and I postponed disclosing myself to her, in order that my plans, which that disclosure would have interfered with, might not be thwarted. I laboured in the pursuit I had prescribed for myself. You know how I have succeeded; and in the belief that true happiness will crown our future days, I can almost forget even the horrors with which this morning has been fraught."

It is impossible to describe the joy that filled the hearts of the three persons who were present

at this unexpected discovery; and it would be idle to repeat the expressions of delight and wonder that burst from them in turn. Emmeline was happier, a thousand times happier, than she had ever felt in her life—too happy for anything but to embrace, and to weep with joy while she embraced, that parent for whom her heart had yearned so long.

Mr. Mortimer was the first to interrupt this interesting scene. Looking at his watch, he said, "an affair of importance calls me away, and I have occasion for your assistance, Redhurst. Emmeline, I know your arrangement with Lady Helena. It is somewhat too early to expect her yet; but my carriage is at the door, and as I am going to pass her house, I will leave you there, and join you as soon as the business which now calls us away shall be dispatched."

Emmeline accepted this offer gladly. She

shrunk from the meeting with Lady De Verney, after what had happened on the preceding night, and she was besides too happy to permit her joy to be damped by the altercation and violence which she believed must ensue if she remained. They departed therefore, and Emmeline hurried to her friend, who was not yet risen, to impart to her the wonder and joy with which her heart was filled.

CHAPTER X.

"Honour! that often prostituted name,
That gaudy idol which ill men set high,
That the low kneeling crowd who worship it
May not perceive its ugly hollowness."

FLETCHER.

RAGOTZKY was, as the reader will have guessed long ere this, a most accomplished knave; but he was by no means deficient in courage. He would have been at any time quite as ready to put his life in imminent peril for the purpose of maintaining the false reputation he had acquired, as an honester man would have been to preserve his honour; and the outrage he had received from Lord William Neville's blow

had so excited his fury that a thirst for vengeance was added to the other motives he had for demanding satisfaction. His first business on quitting Lady De Verney's house, was to seek some person who would call upon his antagonist, to give him the meeting which had become indispensable. This was not very difficult. There were, he knew, an abundance of idle young military men, whom he often met in the circles in which he moved, who knew just enough of him to render him this service; and who, although they would have hesitated, to answer for his character or respectability upon a more trifling occasion, would not scruple to violate the laws of God and man in this, falsely called, affair of honour. Such is "the way of the world."

Ragotzky had not long to seek; on the steps of Lady De Verney's house, he met Captain Pemberton, who had just alighted from his ca-

briolet. Ragotzky's appearance, stained as he was with blood, his dress disordered, and his manner betokening great agitation, was enough to induce the placid captain, who had some slight acquaintance with him, to enquire what had occasioned so extraordinary a spectacle. Ragotzky begged him to enter the carriage which he had in waiting, and there telling his own story, soon convinced Pemberton that he had a very sufficient reason for calling out Lord William Neville. As he had rather a taste for duelling, he was not at all backward in promising to be the bearer of the message which Ragotzky dictated, and, having left the Count at his lodgings, he returned to seek Lord William, the circumstances of the transaction rendering it desirable that there should be as little delay as possible.

Nothing could happen more opportunely for his purpose than the situation in which he

found his lordship, who was engaged, at the moment of Captain Pemberton's arrival, in conversation with an old friend of his whom he had not seen for some years. This was a Captain Terence O'Doyle, a sort of distant cousin of Lord William's, whom he had known intimately when a boy, but who had passed his life ever since their last parting in France. O'Doyle was the youngest of the thirteen children, of a very excellent simple hearted Irish country gentleman, whose fortune was no more equal to his merit, than it was sufficient for the provision of his large family. His sons had all entered the army or the navy at very early ages, and Terence had been invited by a maternal relative, an officer in the Irish brigade of France, to enter that service, where the circumstance of his being a Roman Catholic, would not prove such an obstacle to his advancement, as it would at that time have been in England.

Terence had accepted the offer with alacrity. He had distinguished himself when he was little more than a boy, by some acts of extraordinary heroism, and, having gained promotion rapidly, was at this time a captain in the Emperor's body guard, a regiment in which many of his countrymen, whom the mistaken policy of the English government had driven to seek their fortunes and devote their energies under a foreign standard, also served. As peace now prevailed, he had obtained leave of absence, had visited his relations in Ireland, and was staying for a short time in London, previous to his return to France. He had just been giving his early friend, Lord William Neville, an account of his adventures, when Captain Pemberton called the latter away to communicate to him the invitation from Ragotzky, of which he was the bearer.

Lord William was quite prepared for such

an announcement, and although he was somewhat surprised at its being conveyed by Captain Pemberton, he was too much a man of the world to suffer any outward indication of this feeling to appear. It occurred to him instantly that, of all his acquaintances, O'Doyle, being perfectly disengaged, and just about to quit the country, was the most eligible person to accompany him, and he knew enough of him to believe that he would readily accede to his request. He therefore turned from Captain Pemberton, acquainted O'Doyle with the purport of the message he had just received, and requested him to make the necessary arrangements for the meeting.

A few words of explanation with Pemberton, sufficed to convince O'Doyle, that, from the violence which had accompanied the affair, all chance of accommodation without a meeting would be impossible; and having settled that

it should take place on the following morning, within a few miles of London, and that pistols should be the weapons—the parties separated.

At the hour which had been appointed, in a small hollow on Wimbledon Common, which, from its position, was effectually screened from observation, Lord William and Captain O'Doyle, having sent away their carriage, were waiting the approach of the other parties. In a few minutes afterwards, Ragotzky and Captain Pemberton appeared, and the friends approaching each other, began to make their preparations. O'Doyle, who had not seen his friend's antagonist on the preceding night, was looking at him with a very natural curiosity. Ragotzky, who had worn a cloak on his first arrival, threw it off, when O'Doyle, uttering an exclamation of surprise, walked up to him, looked him sternly in the face, and then returned to Captain Pemberton.

"Give me leave to ask, sir," said he, "if you know the person you accompany on this occasion?"

"Certainly," replied Pemberton, "I do."

"And have you known him long?"

"Perhaps, about two years;—but what can this enquiry have to do with our present business?"

"Only this," said O'Doyle; "that if you do know him, I am surprised to find you associated with him; and whether you do or not, I venture to tell you he is a person whom no gentleman ought to meet. I cannot allow this affair to go further."

Ragotzky, who was near enough to hear the whole of this conversation took no part in it; but an evident confusion overspread his face.

Pemberton who was more ingenious at getting in the wrong, and more pertinacious in continuing in it than most men, made up his

mind not to listen to anything that might interfere with the business he had in hand.

"I really do not pretend to understand," said he, "what ground you may have for the observations you now make, Captain O'Doyle; nor do I know what they can have to do with our present business. If there was any objection to the Count Ragotzky, it should have been mentioned last night; we have now gone too far to retract."

"*Count* Ragotzky!" repeated O'Doyle. "He is just as much a Count as myself. I'll tell you who he is," and he spoke loud enough to be heard by the object of his address, at the same time fixing his eyes upon him with a very stern expression. "He is one of those persons who are so much too clever for their own country, that they find it convenient to try the air of another. He was, when I saw him last, the *croupier* to an indifferent Paris gaming

house. His name then was Didot; how it has since become Ragotzky, I do not pretend to guess. He was sentenced to the galleys, from which punishment, I believe, he escaped. This account, and I can tell you much more of him, if you wish, is, I think, quite enough to justify me in saying that he is not a person whom Lord William Neville can meet."

Captain Pemberton looked mortified and surprised. He was, however, too obstinate to yield willingly, and, turning to Ragotzky, he said: "You hear what this gentleman says, Monsieur?"

Ragotzky had recovered his composure. "I hear it all," he replied, with coolness. "And if, after what has passed, anything *could* astonish me, it would be to find men who claim to be called persons of honour resorting to a contrivance so utterly unworthy. At a future opportunity I shall treat the calumny as it

deserves. Here I have no time; let us dispatch the business which this tale is invented only to postpone, and as soon as that is over I will teach this person, whom I never saw before, what they deserve who assail the honour of a gentleman with infamous falsehoods."

The blood rushed to O'Doyle's face, and nothing but the particular circumstances in which he was placed, prevented him from dashing the impostor to the earth. He turned to Pemberton, who said, coolly: "Very well. The Count denies the statement you make against him. I am bound to believe what he says, and can only conclude that you are mistaken. You will, however, give me leave to observe that the time has gone by at which you could make any objection to your friend Lord William Neville's meeting him. The outrage of which he complains is one, I need not remind you, which levels all distinctions

of rank, even if there were any. We had therefore better go on."

"By Heaven!" said O'Doyle. "I know the man as well as I know my own hand; and he knows me. Besides, I will never permit Neville, who knows nothing of pistols, to stand the fire of that *spadassin*, whom I have seen repeatedly earn his dinner by cutting off the poppies' heads with pistol balls in the shooting grounds of Paris."

"That is unlucky, I confess," said Pemberton, "but it cannot now be remedied."

"I understand," said O'Doyle, "that he gives himself out as a Captain of Lancers. He must therefore be acquainted with the use of a sabre, and with that weapon Neville will stand some chance. He has none with a pistol."

"Impossible," replied Pemberton; "the choice of the arms was left to you, and you named pistols. You will excuse me for saying

it is quite out of the question now to make any change. The duel must proceed according to the usual forms, and I am sure that Captain O'Doyle knows too well what they are to persist in objections which cannot be maintained, and which only serve to consume time."

Lord William had heard the whole of this conversation, and although he was as brave as any man living, it would be untrue to deny that a very uncomfortable sensation crossed his mind at learning that Ragotzky was so skilful a marksman, with a weapon with which he had no practical acquaintance at all. He knew, however, that the arguments of Captain Pemberton were justified by the sophistry which is usually allowed to prescribe the law upon such occasions, and although he believed that the issue of the combat could not be other than fatal to himself, the necessity of conforming

to the absurd prejudices of the world appeared to him so imperative that he called to his friend and begged him to permit the affair to proceed. O'Doyle's natural impetuosity was raised to an almost ungovernable pitch, but his duty required him to restrain it. He felt that there were no means of avoiding the conditions to which he had himself agreed, and, not trusting himself to speak again, he began to load the pistols. This operation was soon finished. By way of neutralising, as much as was practicable, the fearful advantage which he knew the foreigner possessed, he proposed to Captain Pemberton that the combatants should turn their backs to each other, and that they should fire upon the instant that the word should be given. This was agreed to; a pistol was handed to each of them, and O'Doyle repeated, with a loud voice, the terms upon which the duel was to take place, adding em-

phatically. "Now mark me, gentlemen, each of you holds a weapon—I have one also; and if the conditions to which Captain Pemberton and myself have agreed, are not observed in the strictest manner—if the fire does not take place the moment I give the word—and if either of you permit time enough to take an aim to elapse, after that word is uttered, the contents of my pistol shall be directed against him who fails."

A pause ensued—the seconds withdrew to the distance that was thought convenient, and stood beside each other. All was ready—when, at this moment, the sound of horses' feet was heard, and in the next, four persons mounted appeared in sight, and galloped between the combatants. Before the surprise occasioned by this movement could be expressed, two of them had dismounted, and seizing Ragotzky, had taken his pistol from

him. These were police officers; the other two were Mr. Mortimer and Lord Redhurst. A very short explanation sufficed to account for their interference. Mr. Mortimer announced that it was by his means that the duel was prevented, and that the officers of justice had been brought there expressly at his application.

Captain Pemberton, in the first moment of his disappointment, thought it incumbent on him to resent the impediment which was thus offered to his morning's amusement, and expressed his intention of calling for an explanation from Mr. Mortimer.

"I have lived too long, sir, in the world," replied Mr. Mortimer, "to care very much for that idol to which I find you disposed to sacrifice every thing. All the explanation a reasonable man and a gentleman can ask, you will find me ready at any time to render; but

if you imagine that I shall be induced upon such provocation as that you hint at, to forget my duty as a citizen, and a christian, I think you will be mistaken."

Pemberton felt that Mr. Mortimer's years justified him in the step he had taken. He began to think too, that he might have been somewhat hasty in having volunteered to appear as the friend of a man of whom he knew so little, and for whom he had no greater respect than this Count Ragotzky. He was however not disposed to abandon him, and asked the police officers, who still kept him in custody what they intended to do.

"We must trouble you, sir," replied one of them, "to go with us before a magistrate, and satisfy him that you have no further intention to break the peace. As for this gentleman we shall not have done with him quite so soon."

"Why is that gentleman to be treated with more harshness than any other person?" asked Pemberton, angrily.

"Why, sir," replied the man, "for no other reason than because he deserves it. I have had a warrant against him from the Alien office for some time; only as I was not quite sure of my man, I did not like to take him. I have him now, however, and if he can clear himself, so much the better for him;—if not, he must go out of the country."

"Let me see your warrant," said Pemberton.

"Well, since I suppose you *are* a gentleman," said the man, "I have no objection, although it is not usual;" and as he spoke he put a paper into Pemberton's hand.

Upon reading it, he perceived it was an order to arrest Louis Didot, who was described as passing under several other names, among which was that of the Count de Ragotzky. He

was now convinced that O'Doyle was under no mistake in describing him as he had done, and with that generosity, of which, notwithstanding a great many faults of temper, and defects of judgment, he possessed a considerable share, he approached O'Doyle, and tendered his apologies for having insisted that the duel should go on.

"Don't say a word about it," said O'Doyle, "I am not sure you were altogether wrong; although you must forgive me for saying that the fondness you displayed just now for fighting, right or wrong, convinces me that you have some of our old Hibernian blood in your veins, however it may have been diluted."

Every thing was now soon settled. The parties returned to town. Lord William and the two friends were compelled to enter into sureties to keep the peace, which, Mr. Mortimer observed, could do them no harm, and Ra-

gotzky who had been very accurately described by O'Doyle, was transferred to the Alien office; shortly after which he was sent out of England to pursue his fortunes among other dupes. Whether he found any as easily gulled as those he had met with here, or what was his future destiny, history has not informed us.

Mr. Mortimer and his nephew returned to the house of Lord De Verney. It would be bootless to describe the meeting between the brothers. Mr. Mortimer had seen his relative often of late without being known by him, and had seen, with pain, that time had only confirmed in him the faults which his education had produced, and which had been sufficiently prominent in his earlier years. Lord De Verney was glad to find his long lost brother; but he was wholly incapable of strong feeling of any kind, and least of all of such as were of an exalted nature.

With Lady De Verney Mr. Mortimer's interview was of a much sterner nature. She had too much tact not to endeavour to recommend herself to one who she heard was extremely rich, and who, she knew, could not look upon her with any very favourable views, if he should be acquainted, as she suspected he was, with her treatment towards his daughter.

Mr. Mortimer spared her the pain of continuing this dissimulation. He took an opportunity, when they were alone, of convincing her that he was fully aware of the extent of his obligations to her. "You have endeavoured, my Lady," he said, "to destroy the happiness of my child; and my revenge has been, that I have saved both of yours from destruction." He then quitted her, and left her to vent her rage upon those who were in a situation to heed her violence. Mademoiselle Blache, after the exposure of the preceding

evening, had not thought it prudent to wait for any explanation, but had decamped *sans tambour ni trompette.* Lady Sophia, therefore, had the exclusive benefit of her mother's angry remonstrances and reproaches, although the force of them was in a considerable degree mitigated by her desire to keep the unfortunate affair which had excited them as secret as possible, in which, owing to the generous moderation of Emmeline and Lady Helena, she was more successful than she deserved to be.

CHAPTER XI.

———"Ill news
Are swallow-wing'd; but what's good walks on crutches."

EMMELINE, in her father's house, forgot all the sorrows she had of late endured, and in his society, and in that of her friend, Lady Helena, enjoyed so much perfect happiness, that she soon learned to think of Lady De Verney with less bitterness than her relative's unnatural and unjust conduct was well calculated to excite. Sir Henry Daverout shortly afterwards appeared in England, and Emmeline expressed to him, with heartfelt grati-

tude, her thanks for the service he had rendered. She had, besides, the gratification of finding that he was perfectly reconciled to her refusal of him, and that he was neither surprised nor very much pained at perceiving that Lord William Neville was her acknowledged lover. By a sort of mutual consent he was disposed to place himself, and Emmeline to receive him, in the character of an old friend, and upon these terms Emmeline was delighted with his society.

Mr. Laurimer was, beyond all comparison, superior in mind and character to all men she had hitherto met with; and to the natural affection which she entertained for him as her father was added the respect and veneration to which his manly virtues entitled him. On his part he felt repaid for all the sufferings he had undergone; and, although he could not recollect the past without considerable

pain, he returned fervent thanks to Heaven for his present happiness. He gazed on his daughter with the most passionate fondness, the most tender and unrepressed admiration. He followed each lively feeling, however transient, and watched each fleeting expression that marked her countenance: a countenance in which he beheld, as in a clear mirror, the reflection of his own impressions, softened by feminine delicacy and native reserve. If Mr. Laurimer dwelt with transport on the uncommon endowments with which nature had blessed the offspring of Louisa, Emmeline herself was lost in new-born feelings of enjoyment at thus unexpectedly meeting with a character so entirely assimilating with her own. Miss Laurimer had met with kindness and affection, but never before with sympathy. One look of her father, a single tone of his voice, caused her whole being to glow with pleasure, for

every shade of feeling that inspired them found an answering one in her breast. His conversation, superior in judgment, experience, and knowledge, was, in point of sentiment, the echo of her own thoughts. She was now sure of some one to share her enjoyment on even the most trifling occasion, and happiness is not merely doubled by participation, it is but faintly and imperceptibly possessed without it.

Lord William Neville's misgivings had returned when he became acquainted with the character of Emmeline's father, and he feared that his influence might deprive him of the treasure he had so earnestly sought. Emmeline, however, remained firm to her promise and dispelled his fears. Mr. Laurimer received him with pensive and anxious kindness. He tried not to see the little congeniality that could ever subsist between the tastes and opinions of this amiable but un-

certain being and the refined and sensitive Emmeline. However, when he perceived the pleasure with which she saw him, and the interest with which she watched the progress he made in her father's approbation, he consented, without hesitation, to that day month being fixed upon for their marriage. Still each succeeding day increased his astonishment at his daughter's choice, and he could not help expressing it to his nephew, whose torpid mind he took delight in arousing. Lord Redhurst bore testimony to the merits of his friend, but fearing the somewhat stern disposition of his uncle, he forbore detailing Lord William's generosity in refusing to take advantage of Lady De Verney's violent efforts in his favour. Already he perceived that Mr. Laurimer felt but little respect for his sister-in-law, and Lord Redhurst prudently avoided any topic that might bring to light

the slight degree of harmony that had subsisted between Emmeline and her aunt; and which, indeed, Mr. Laurimer knew, although he did not know the whole of Lady De Verney's culpability in that respect.

Lord De Verney had pressed his brother to remain with him until after Miss Laurimer's marriage; but the latter was of too haughty and independent a character to submit to the society of people he neither liked nor esteemed, and he at once set up an establishment. Lady Sophia, who recovered without much difficulty, from the disappointment occasioned by Ragotzky's flight, was, very innocently, a source of constant irritation to her uncle, by her eternal chattering, and never endless observations upon what required no observation. Her eye caught every thing, and her mind nothing. This was a character with which Mr. Laurimer could have no sort of patience.

The weak and timid spirit of his brother provoked him nearly as much. Lord Redhurst, who proved himself a completely altered man, and who remained firm in the determination he had formed, never again to engage in his late pursuits, alone interested him; and many a time did he regret that Fate had not marked him out for the husband of Emmeline.

The lawyers could not finish the writings by the day fixed, as the various settlements respecting Mr. Laurimer's large property, naturally took up much time. Lord William bore the delay impatiently, and expressed himself in terms that appeared so exaggerated, to Emmeline, she scarce refrained from smiling; yet she regretted it, as it gave him uneasiness, and sought, by every means in her power, to dissipate his disquietude.

The inhabitants of the west end of the town were sleeping off the effects of the midnight

revels; no carriage was stirring, and the busy mechanic or artisan alone crossed the almost deserted street, when a stranger, whose pensive air, and dark habit, were in mournful unison, stopped at Mr. Laurimer's door, and demanded to see him.

"My master is not within," said the servant, "but my mistress is at home, if you would like to see her."

The stranger seemed surprised, but, after a momentary hesitation, followed the servant. As he ascended the stairs, the sound of music reached him, and involuntarily he stopped. "Alas!" thought he, "I come to mar all gaiety." He passed on, and the servant, resting his hand on the lock of the door, waited to announce him, but he waited in vain, for the stranger, lost in musing, heard not the question that was put to him. On its repetition, impatiently he uttered the name of Alta-

mont, and the servant, not catching the sound, ushered him into the drawing-room with an unintelligible one of his own invention.

Emmeline rose from her harp, and bowed in silence to the stranger, who, in a grave tone of voice, said, "I expected to find Mr. Laurimer at home, at this early hour."

"My father has but just left me," replied Emmeline, in a gentle accent, interested by his melancholy appearance, "can I deliver any message to him?"

"Yes," said the young man, "none so well as yourself. I grieve to say I am the herald of misfortune—misfortune for which you alone can comfort your father."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the alarmed Emmeline, glancing fearfully over his mourning habit, with the vague idea that it had some reference to the misfortune of which he spoke.

The stranger did not appear to know exactly how to proceed; after a momentary hesitation he said, slowly, "I am just come from Italy:" he paused and fixed his eyes on his anxious auditress, but she could not guess the rest. "My name is Altamont—I met your brother abroad."

"No harm of Albert, I hope?" interrupted Emmeline, fearfully.

A despondent gesture was the sole reply of Altamont, and suddenly Miss Laurimer remembered her father having read a letter of Albert's, in which he expressed himself much delighted to have met with a relation of that name.

"He is dead!" she exclaimed, vehemently, clasping her hands, and letting them drop motionless by her side, on receiving an assenting look from Altamont.

An approaching step was heard—"Oh! my

poor father!" said the shuddering Emmeline, in the low tone of anxious terror. It was not Mr. Laurimer, and, considerably relieved, his daughter sat down to reflect upon the best mode of breaking this unlooked-for misfortune to him.

"Could not you, Mr. Altamont," she asked, timidly, "prepare him in some way?"

"Who," he replied, "can prepare a parent for the loss of an only son, and such a son, too, as Albert? If Mr. Laurimer possesses but half the impetuosity of feeling which characterised his son, all delay or circumlocution must be avoided. It would be like trifling with him. Tell him gently, but instantaneously. When he can bear to hear particulars, send for me, and I will give them either in writing or conversation, whichever you deem most proper."

"Oh!" said the agitated Emmeline, "why

must I be the person to announce misery to my father? Can no hand but mine be found——" She stopped in the midst of her sentence, awed by the sudden sternness that crossed the brow of Altamont.

"Miss Laurimer," he said, coldly, "if I wished you to speak to your father, it was because I thought he would suffer less from a communication made by you. I had no intention of sparing *myself*, and if you reject the task as too distressing, on me it devolves, and I am ready to execute it."

"Certainly, I shall not exact it of you," said Emmeline, colouring at the lofty severity of her visitor's manner, and the imputation of selfishness he seemed to cast upon her.

"I have offended," said he, with a conciliating, yet mournful smile, "and where I should most have avoided it. If you knew all I have recently suffered, perhaps you might be

tempted to forgive my seeming harshness." His voice faltered, and the sympathetic tears springing to the eyes of Emmeline, she hastily extended her hand to Altamont.

"If you were severe, I probably deserved it," said she eagerly; "and I am sure I did not deserve such an apology."

"You are indeed Albert's sister," exclaimed Altamont, with emotion, and they parted better known to each other than many who have been in the daily habit of meeting in the same places, and saying the same things for years.

The impassioned nature of Mr. Laurimer but ill sustained this fearful shock. Alive only to feelings of anguish, he mourned afresh the loss of his amiable wife, and the exemplary De Sollivan. He reproached himself with having ever parted from this darling boy. With the anxiety of a sick mind, he longed to

be again in India, among the scenes associated with the remembrance of Albert and his sainted mother. In the solitude of his darkened chamber, he refused admittance even to the gentle Emmeline, for she had not known his son. He betrayed no wish to hear the means that had deprived him of Albert. It was enough that he was gone. The spirit of the wretched father was broken, but a sense of duty called him to his family circle. Every day, as he arose, he determined that should be the day of effort, and he retired at night, without having had courage to tear himself from that nameless intercourse with the departed, which solitude gives to every soul of sensibility. The twilight of evening scarce sufficed to render objects discernible, when Frederick Laurimer, arousing all his energy to do that which was right, quitted his chamber, and with the slow step of despondency, descended to join

his daughter. As he approached her room, voices sounded on his ear, and involuntarily he retreated. Momentary reflection, however, forbad him to yield to the first impulse of feeling, and he resolutely determined to persevere. Advancing nearer, the voice of a stranger reached him; he paused, but he felt no inclination to recede, for it was the low cadence of grief. Mr. Laurimer entered softly, and the speaker, who was turned from him, continued—

"The experience of a day proves to us that man was made to mourn. I feel that it is so. Why should I struggle with fate?"

"That you may overcome it," exclaimed Redhurst, in a lofty accent.

"Ah, my cousin," said Emmeline, "you argue from theory, and Altamont from experience. The energy that would teach us to

overcome all things, is subdued by misfortune. It is our duty to strive with our own feelings, but not with circumstances which we cannot change, and which are ruled by a Power whose wisdom and mercy we may not doubt."

"These were Maddalena's sentiments," said Lord De Verney, taking his niece's hand, affectionately.

"Cherish them," said Mr. Laurimer, emphatically.

"Emmeline started at beholding her father. He had not been perceived, owing to the darkness of the room, and besides no intimation had been received of his intention to join them. There was a dead silence; no one knowing whether to go or remain. A servant approached with candles. Altamont sprung to the open door to prevent his entrance; he felt that the gaiety of light would be painful to

Mr. Laurimer; sorrow shrinks from its garish brilliancy, irritated by that which enlivens pleasure. There are feelings which we care not to express, but are gratified when they are guessed. Such were Frederick Laurimer's. He addressed an indifferent question to Altamont, in a tone which, by strong effort, was calm.

The conversation became general, and although the wandering mind of the afflicted parent incessantly started from the subject on which he endeavoured to speak, he quitted the circle more collected than he had been on joining it.

The composure that succeeds violent anguish, is the calm of despondency, not the placidity of repose. The heart that is dilated with pleasure, is but the more liable to admit woe; but where it has been bowed down with

misery, it cannot instantaneously open to joy. Torpor succeeds acute pain, because nature is exhausted; time deadens recollection, because we are formed to rejoice as well as to lament.

CHAPTER XII.

"Must then the grave insatiate reign?
Must Fate this too tyrannic sway maintain?
And must the learn'd, the good, the young,
Be the sad subject of a funeral song?"

THORNTON.

ONE evening, Mr. Laurimer, whose serenity had been slowly, but gradually returning, requested of Altamont to speak of his son. It was the first time he had alluded to his loved Albert since the dreadful tidings of his death, and Emmeline hailed the symptom of reviving strength with mournful pleasure. No one else was present, and Altamont, gues-

sing that Mr. Laurimer could now bear to hear the particulars of Albert's death, although he had not courage expressly to name it, after a momentary pause, began the recital.

"About two years ago, I became acquainted with my cousin. Accident conducted us both to the superb chapel of Our Lady of Loretto, to witness the ceremony of a novice taking the veil. Albert's youth and excessive emotion interested and attracted me. We entered into conversation, and his fascinating manner and expressive countenance won more of my regard than I am apt to bestow on strangers. Very soon we ceased to be such. I learnt our relationship with pleasure, and hastened to introduce my amiable cousin to a father and brother who are now no more." Altamont paused: a faint hectic flushed his cheeks, but quickly it died away, and he proceeded.

"Albert was to travel. My father proposed

my accompanying him, and we both entered into the plan with alacrity. Having gone through Germany and France, we sailed from Marseilles, meaning to go to Leghorn. A contrary wind blew us about in sight of the port, and we were obliged to make for the island of Capraia. Here Albert and a young lieutenant landed, as I concluded from mere motives of curiosity, but I had reason to change my opinion when I beheld them both borne back to the vessel, wounded and senseless."

A deep groan burst from the agonized Laurimer, and, in a tone of horror, he exclaimed —" He was then killed in a duel!"

" Not so," retorted Altamont, with energy: " your son died nobly, gloriously, magnanimously. Oh, that I had died like him!"

The agitated father scarce dared to breathe; so intense and anxious was his expectation. He cast an imploring look at the animated

countenance of the speaker, who more calmly continued—" Albert quickly recovered, for his wound was slight and his constitution excellent. His antagonist lingered for some time, and, even when declared out of danger, was so weak as to be unable to walk without assistance. This thoughtless young man had in a moment of inebriation raised the anger of the fiery and impetuous Albert. Rendered calmer by reflection, the lieutenant was aware that he had been wrong, yet fearing the imputation of cowardice he had not strength of mind sufficient to acknowledge it, but agreed to meet Albert whenever he would choose to call upon him, on the first land they made. Our vessel had been so completely dismantled by the storm, that she was obliged to remain some time at Capraia to refit. While we were thus losing our time, several frigates belonging to the republic of Genoa passed us, and one

of them giving me notice of the death of my father and illness of my brother, I determined not to wait until the ship on board which I was should be ready to sail; but instantly took my passage in another. I endeavoured in vain to prevail on Albert, who was quite recovered, to accompany me. He had formed a friendship with the young man he had fought, and would not consent to abandon him in his then languid state. I promised him to repair to Leghorn, if I found my brother better, there to await his arrival. Arrived in Italy, I learnt that my brother was no longer an inhabitant of this world, and proceeded to Leghorn, as Albert had desired. I beheld the ship that was conveying him home wrecked on the very shores! Numerous were the boats that put out in spite of the storm, from the faint hope of saving some of the crew. I was in one of them, and every form that floated on the

waves I hoped might be my cousin. The ship went down, and maddening at the shrieks of the sinking sailors which rent the air, I longed to precipitate myself along with them, so that I might hear them no more. I began to despair of being useful to any one, when I perceived something swimming. I plied my oars with renewed energy, and soon distinguished my cousin bearing the body of a young man in his arms. He recognized me, and made towards my boat, but just as he reached it, he sunk! When he arose again he was bereft of sense, but still clung to the body of his friend, who was unable to swim, from his recent wound, and whom Albert was bent on saving at the hazard of his own life. I conveyed them both to the shore. Albert expired before he reached it. He could not speak, but expressed by signs his wish that I should see you: I assured him that I would, and smiling affection-

ately, he closed his eyes for ever. He certainly suffered no pain, his death being merely occasioned by exhaustion. He was an excellent swimmer, and there is no doubt that he might have saved himself had he not insisted on carrying the young lieutenant, whom he felt bound to protect, as he had been the means of disabling him. His friend did not long survive him. I buried them together, in spite of the opposition I met with from the priests, who objected to the body of a heretic resting in consecrated ground beside that of a catholic; but superstition in these days gives way to interest, and I succeeded."

Altamont paused: he cast a compassionate glance on Mr. Laurimer, who shaded his face with his hands in agony mute and inexpressible, and on the weeping Emmeline, who suffered for every one. The melancholy relator felt unequal to the attempt at consola-

tion, and gently withdrew, unnoticed by the wretched parent.

A child cries itself to sleep, and is at rest; but the tears that are reluctantly called forth by the heavy pressure of misery from the manly heart, give no relief. They are the indications of pangs which words cannot tell, and prove that the sufferer is enduring the utmost wretchedness. Such were the tears that slowly escaped from the half-closed eyes of Frederick Laurimer, as he dwelt on the narrative of Altamont. His colourless lips parted with tremulous motion, but he could not command his voice to speak. He looked up, and met with mingled pain and pleasure the sympathising glance of Emmeline. To see her pale and sorrowful, soothed him, although a feeling of regret arose that she too should suffer.

"My child," said he, tenderly, "instead of comfort I have brought you sorrow."

Emmeline threw herself into his arms, and her father felt he had yet blessings for which to be thankful.

Lord William Neville had renewed his visits to Mr. Laurimer, which he had forborne while his grief was recent; but still had too much delicacy to hint at depriving him of his daughter, while her presence was so peculiarly necessary. The sacrifice was no slight one, for Lord William's passion for Miss Laurimer was approaching to adoration, and its fervency had frequently astonished the calmer Emmeline. On again mixing with the world, she was not a little astonished at perceiving that Lady Sophia, to her usual giddiness, had added airs of sentiment. They suited her character so little, which was a remarkably natural one, that her cousin's curiosity was excited. Lady Sophia hesitated not to gratify it, by informing her as a great secret, that she was in love with

Sir Henry Daverout. Emmeline retained her gravity with difficulty, and promised discretion. She did more, for she kept her promise: but Lady Sophia was totally incapable of concealment. To think anything which she did not instantly say, was not in her nature; and Sir Henry and all the world were quickly as well informed on the subject as her confidential friend. Her advances surprised and flattered Sir Henry: his friends declared he was bound to take compassion on the lovely daughter of Lady De Verney; and although no fool, Sir Henry thought so too. They were married before Emmeline and her father could recover from their astonishment at hearing it surmised. Mr. Laurimer was angry. He disliked his niece almost as much as he despised her; and he felt grieved at the inconsistency of a person for whom he had a strong regard, in having chosen Lady Sophia Laurimer, after having

loved, or imagined he loved, two women so different as *his* sister and *his* daughter.

"He was determined to be in the family, I suppose, my dear sir," said the laughing Emmeline, whose imagination, struck with the ludicrous, did not instantly advert to future repentance.

"I'll answer for it," exclaimed Lord William, "this man whom you are quizzing, will be very happy. Lady Sophia is very pretty and very merry, and what would you more?"

"A great deal," quickly replied Altamont, in an impressive accent, fixing his eyes on the blushing Emmeline.

"You are not difficult, my Lord," observed Mr. Laurimer, haughtily.

Emmeline felt bound to protect Lord William, and good naturedly said, "My poor cousin I perceive has but unsuccessful advocates

in you and I, when my father and Mr. Altamont are against us."

Lord William smiled triumphantly, and the grave Altamont looked graver still. There was something in his manner and in his silence that moved Miss Laurimer, without her being able exactly to explain or account for the emotion. Great was her admiration and esteem for this young man, and many the ties of sympathy that bound him to her. His disposition was of that undefinable sort, which by turns excites our wonder and regard. The various changes of his expressive countenance drew attention, precisely because they were rarely to be understood. As we grow attached to a book, which on every fresh perusal presents us with new ideas, so is our interest powerfully awakened by those rare characters which, without forfeiting consistency, never appear

in precisely the same light: as long as there is something to discover, to fathom, there must be something to interest and attract. When called upon to deliver his sentiments on any given point, Charles Altamont never failed to express them energetically and decidedly, but in general conversation they were dubious: yet you felt that it was not that his opinions could be unfixed or unstable, but simply that he did not feel it necessary to give them utterance.

The thoughtlessness of Lord William, and the impetuosity of Mr. L., prevented Emmeline from looking to them for cool and rational decisions. Altamont became then her criterion; a gesture, a look, a half word from him fixed her judgment. Of the full extent of this tacit deference she was not herself aware, until she fancied him dissatisfied with her. Lord William left the room, and Mr. Laurimer took

up a book: Emmeline continued to work, but frequently she gazed on the absent Altamont, whose despondent air appeared but to increase from reflection. At last she said timidly, "Are you angry with me, Mr. Altamont?"

He started, and smiling mournfully, said, "Why should you suppose so, my dear cousin?"

"I do not know," she hastily replied, colouring deeply at the idea that he was perhaps not thinking of her.

Altamont's keen eye took in her feelings at one glance; but he found it impossible to say any thing to relieve her that would not appear exaggerated: the entrance of Lord Redhurst fortunately relieved him. Mr. Laurimer congratulated him on his sister's marriage. "Little did I think," he gaily replied, "that Lady Sophia would have got the start of Emmeline. Seriously," he continued, addressing her, "you

do put my poor friend's patience to the test most barbarously, and no one seems to have any compassion on him but me. Had I enlisted myself one of your humble admirers, I should have hanged myself before now, if you had behaved so ill."

"Would you?" said Emmeline, faintly, forcing a smile, and bowing to Altamont, who rose to depart.

"Oh, without the least doubt," continued Lord Redhurst; "and then it would have been but decent in you to die of remorse. That's quite *dans les règles*."

"I do assure you," said Miss Laurimer, "neither Lord William nor I are so desperate. He will certainly not hang himself any more than I shall break my heart, even if we were never to marry."

"What do you mean?" asked Lord Redhurst in a voice of alarm.

"Nay, do not look so dismayed, my good cousin, your interest for your friend is natural enough, but while he does not complain, you would not be so cruel as to repine at my liberty?"

"Surely, my dear Emmeline, you ought to appreciate the delicacy of his conduct in not urging you when you are so completely fettered?"

"Fettered!" repeated Emmeline in an absent voice, "yes, I am completely fettered."

"Not so, my child," said Mr. Laurimer, who had been attentively marking her, "you shall do only what you choose."

Emmeline slowly arose. "I choose to marry the person to whom I am engaged, to whom I owe infinite gratitude," she said with effort.

"Might I venture then," said Lord Redhurst, "to recommend you to hasten your marriage?"

"You are afraid of me, I perceive," replied Emmeline. "Fix my marriage for when you please, all times are alike to me. You cannot wonder that, happy as I now am, I should dislike to change."

"If that is all," said Lord Redhurst hesitatingly.

She burst into tears, for she felt it was not all. Pained at the emotion he saw her suffer, but wholly unable to account for it, her cousin spoke soothingly, and presently changed the subject of conversation. Miss Laurimer recovered her spirits, and forgot the existence of Lord William Neville.

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